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ANNEX

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Fuller

THE CALVINISTIC AND SOCINIAN SYSTEMS EXAMINED AND COMPARED, AS TO THEIR MORAL TENDENCY;

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS ADDRESSED TO THE FRIENDS OF VITAL AND PRACTICAL RELIGION, ESPECIALLY THOSE AMONGST PROTESTANT DISSENTERS.

BY ANDREW FULLER.

GRACE BE WITH ALL THEM WHO LOVE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN SINCERITY. PAUL.

MARKET-HARBOROUGH,
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY W. HARROD;
AND SOLD BY
BUTTON, NO. 24, PATER-NOSTER-ROW; THOMAS, NO. 29, HOUNDSDITCH; MATTHEWS, STRAND; AND GARDINER, PRINCES-STREET, OXFORD-STREET, LONDON;
JAMES, BRISTOL, AND SMITH, SHEFFIELD.

1793.

Presented to J. M. Mason, by his respected
preceptor, the Revd Dr Hunter of
Edinburgh
8br 1794.

PREFACE.

THE following Letters are addreſſed to *the friends of vital and practical religion*, becauſe the author is perſuaded that the very eſſence of true piety is concerned in this controverſy; and that godly men are the only proper judges of divine truth, being the only humble, upright, and earneſt enquirers after it. So far from thinking with Dr. Prieſtley that "An unbiaſſed temper of mind is "obtained in conſequence of becoming more in-"different to religion in general, and to all the "modes and doctrines of it;" he is ſatisfied that perſons of that deſcription have a moſt powerful bias againſt the truth. He has no notion of the human mind being unoccupied, or indifferent; he that is not a friend to religion in any mode, is an enemy to it in all modes; he is a libertine; he *doth evil*, and therefore *hateth the light*; and ſhall we compliment ſuch a character with being "in the moſt favourable ſituation for diſtinguiſhing "truth from falſhood?" God forbid! It is *he that doth his will, that ſhall know of his doctrine.*

The humble, the candid, the upright enquirers after truth, are the perſons who are likely to find it; and to them the author takes the liberty to appeal.

The reaſon why he addreſſes himſelf to *Proteſtant Diſſenters* in particular, is owing to the late union amongſt them in civil matters having been an occaſion of various miſconceptions, and as he apprehends, of attempts to diſſeminate Socinian principles.

In the late application to Parliament for the repeal of the *Corporation and Teſt Acts*, the Diſſenters have united without any reſpect to their doctrinal principles. They conſidered themſelves, as applying merely for a *civil* right; and that in ſuch an application, difference in theological ſentiments had no more concern, than it has in the union of a nation under one civil head, or form of government.

This union, however, has become an occaſion of many reflections. Serious men of the Eſtabliſhed Church have expreſſed their ſurpriſe that ſome Diſſenters could unite with others ſo oppoſite in their religious principles; and had the union been of a *religious* nature, it muſt indeed have been ſurpriſing. Others have ſuppoſed that the main body of Diſſenters had either embibed the Socinian ſyſtem, or were haſtily approaching towards it. Whether the ſuggeſtion of Dr. Horſley, that "The genuine

"Calviniſts

"Calviniſts among our modern Diſſenters are very "few," has contributed to this opinion, or whatever be it's origin, it is far from being juſt. Every one that *knows* the diſſenters, knows that the body of them are what is commonly called orthodox. Dr. Prieſtley, who is well known to be ſufficiently ſanguine in eſtimating the numbers of his party, ſo ſanguine that when ſpeaking of the *common people* of this country, he reckons "Nine out of ten of "them would prefer an unitarian to a trinitarian "liturgy*; yet acknowleges, in regard of the diſſenters, that unitarians are by far the minority. In Birmingham, where the proportion of their number to the reſt of the diſſenters is greater than in any other town in the kingdom, it appears from Dr. Prieſtley's account of the matter, that thoſe called orthodox are nearly three to one. And throughout England and Wales they have been ſuppoſed to be "As two, if not as three to one to "the Socinians and Arians *incluſive.*" See Dr. Prieſtley's *Famil. Lett. to the Inhabitants of Birmingham.* Let. III and XI. Alſo Mr. *Parry's Remarks on the Reſolutions of the Warwick meeting.*

If Dr. Horſley found it neceſſary in ſupport of his cauſe, to overturn Dr. Prieſtley's aſſertion, that "great bodies of men do not change their opinions

* Def. of Unit. for 1786. p. 61.

" in a ſmall ſpace of time," ſome think he might have found an example more to his purpoſe than that of the body of diſſenters having deſerted their former principles, in the well-known change of the major part of the Church of England; who, about the time of Abp. Laud, went off from Calviniſm to Arminianiſm. Had this example been adduced, his antagoniſt might have found ſome difficulty in maintaining his ground againſt him; as it is an undoubted fact, and a fact which he himſelf acknowleges, with ſeveral others of the kind, in the *Third* of his *Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*.

The ſuppoſition, however, of the diſſenters being generally gone, or going off to Socinianiſm, though far from juſt, has not been without it's apparent grounds. The *conſequence* which Socinians have aſſumed in papers and pamphlets, which have been circulated about the country, has afforded room for ſuch a ſuppoſition. It has not been very uncommon for them to ſpeak of themſelves as THE DISSENTERS, THE MODERN DISSENTERS, &c. It was ſaid in a paper that was publiſhed more than once, " The ancient, like *the modern diſſenters, worſhipped* " *one God*—they knew nothing of the Nicene " or Athanaſian creeds."—The celebrated Authoreſs of *The Addreſs to the oppoſers of the repeal of the Corporation and Teſt-acts*, is not clear in this matter. That otherwiſe admirable performance is tinged

tinged with the pride of party conſequence. "We thank you, Gentlemen, ſhe ſays, for the compli-"ment paid the DISSENTERS when you ſuppoſe "that the moment they are eligible to places of "power and profit, all ſuch places will at once be "filled with them.—*We* had not the preſumption "to imagine that, inconſiderable as we are in "numbers, compared to the eſtabliſhed church, "inferior too in fortune and influence, labouring "as we do, under the frowns of the court, and "THE ANATHEMA OF THE ORTHODOX, we ſhould "make our way ſo readily into the receſſes of "royal favour."—Even the *Monthly Reviewers*, though they have borne teſtimony againſt mingling doctrinal diſputes with thoſe of the repeal of the teſt laws*; yet have ſometimes ſpoken of diſſenters and Socinians, as if they were terms of the ſame meaning and extent. "It appears to us as abſurd, "they ſay, to charge the religious principles of "THE DISSENTERS with republicaniſm, as it would "be to advance the ſame accuſation againſt the "Newtonian Philoſophy. The doctrine of gra-"vitation may as well be deemed dangerous to "the ſtate as SOCINIANISM." *Rev.* for June 1790. p. 247.

Is it unnatural from ſuch repreſentations as theſe, for thoſe who know but little of us, to conſider

* M. R. enlar. Vol. I. p. 233.

the

the Socinians as conſtituting the main body of the diſſenters, and the Calviniſts as only a few ſtragglers, who follow theſe leading men at a diſtance in all their meaſures, but whoſe numbers and conſequence are ſo ſmall, that even the mention of their names amongſt proteſtant diſſenters may very well be omitted?

This, however, as it only affects our reputation, or at moſt can only impede the repeal of the teſt-laws, by ſtrengthening a prejudice, too ſtrong already, againſt the whole body of diſſenters, might be overlooked; but this is not all, it is pretty evident that the union amongſt us in civil matters has been improved for the purpoſe of diſſeminating religious principles. Not only has religion been confounded with the teſt laws, but the teſt laws with religion. What end could Dr. Prieſtley have in introducing ſo much about the teſt act in his controverſy with Mr. Burn, on the perſon of Chriſt; except it were to gild the pill, and make it go down the eaſier with Calviniſtic diſſenters.

The writer of theſe Letters does not blame the diſſenters of his own perſuaſion for uniting with the Socinians. He thinks it lawful to unite with *men*, be their religious principles what they may, in civil matters; but he and many others would be very ſorry if an union of this kind ſhould prove an occaſion of abating our zeal for thoſe religious principles

principles which we conſider as being of the very eſſence of the goſpel.

The reaſon why the term *Socinians* is preferred in the following Letters to that of *Unitarians*, is not for the mean purpoſe of reproach; but becauſe the latter name is not a fair one. The term, as conſtantly explained by themſelves, ſignifies thoſe profeſſors of chriſtianity who worſhip but *one God*; but this is not that wherein they can be *allowed* to be diſtinguiſhed from others; for what profeſſors of chriſtianity are there who profeſs to worſhip a plurality of Gods? Trinitarians profeſs alſo to be unitarians; they, as well as their opponents believe there is but *one God*. To give Socinians this name therefore *excluſively*, would be granting them the very point which they ſeem ſo deſirous to take for granted, that is to ſay, the point in debate.

Names, it may be ſaid, ſignify little, and this ſignifies no more on one ſide than the term orthodox does on the other. The writer owns when he firſt conceived the deſign of publiſhing theſe Letters, he thought ſo; and intended all along to uſe the term unitarians. What made him alter his mind was his obſerving that the principal writers in that ſcheme have frequently availed themſelves of the above name, and appear to wiſh to have it thought by their readers that the point in diſpute

between

between them and the Trinitarians, is, Whether there be *three* Gods, or only *one?*

If he had thought the uſe of the term *unitarians* conſiſtent with juſtice to his own argument, he would have preferred it to that of Socinians; and would alſo have been glad of a term to expreſs the ſyſtem which he has defended, inſtead of calling it after the name of Calvin; as he is aware that calling ourſelves after the names of men (though it be merely to avoid circumlocution) is liable to be underſtood as giving them an authority which is inconſiſtent with a conformity to our Lord's command, *Call no man maſter upon earth; for one is your maſter even Chriſt.*

He has only to add, that the ſubſtance of the following Letters was written before the riots at Birmingham. His regard to juſtice and humanity made him feel much on that occaſion for Dr. Prieſtley, and others who ſuffered with him; but his regard to what he eſteems important truth made him feel more. The injury which a doctrine receives from thoſe who would ſupport it by the unhallowed hands of plunder and perſecution, is far greater, in the eſteem of many, than it can receive from the efforts of it's avowed adverſaries. For his own part, he has generally ſuppoſed that both the contrivers and executors of that iniquitous buſineſs, call themſelves what they will, were men of *no principle.*

principle. If, however thoſe of the high-church party, who inſtead of diſavowing the ſpirit and conduct of the miſguided populace, have manifeſtly exulted in it, muſt be reckoned amongſt the trinitarians; he has only to ſay, they are ſuch trinitarians as he utterly diſapproves, and concerning whom he cannot ſo well expreſs his ſentiments and feelings as in the words of the patriarch: *Inſtruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my ſoul, come not thou into their ſecret; unto their aſſembly mine honour be not thou united: for in their anger they ſlew a man, and in their ſelf-will they digged down a wall. Curſed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel!*

Deteſtable, however, as were the riots at Birmingham, no one can plead that this circumſtance renders the religious principles of Dr. Prieſtley leſs erroneous, or leſs pernicious, or an oppoſition to them, upon the fair ground of argument, leſs neceſſary. On the contrary, the mere circumſtance of his being a perſecuted man will have it's influence on ſome people, and incline them not only to feel for the man, the gentleman, and the philoſopher, all which were right; but to think favourably of his religious opinions. On this conſideration, if the following Letters would, previous to that event, have been in any degree proper and ſeaſonable, they are not by any thing that hath ſince occurred, become improper or unſeaſonable,

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ABBREVIATIONS IN TITLES OF BOOKS.

Let. to a P. U. mean *Dr. Prieſtley's Letters to a Philoſophical Unbeliever.*

Fam. Let. mean *Dr. Prieſtley's Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham.*

Conſid. on Opin. mean *Dr. Prieſtley's Conſiderations on differences in Religious Opinions*, bound up in the Second Edition of *his Familiar Letters.*

THE

CALVINISTIC and SOCINIAN SYSTEMS, &c.

LETTER I.

Introduction and general remarks.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

MUCH has been written of late years on the Socinian controverſy; ſo much that the Attention of the chriſtian world has, in a conſiderable degree, been drawn towards it. There is no reaſon, however, for conſidering this circumſtance as a matter of wonder, or regret. Not of wonder: for ſuppoſing the deity and atonement of Chriſt to be divine truths, they are of that importance in the chriſtian ſcheme as to induce the adverſaries of the goſpel to bend their main force againſt them, as againſt *the rock on which Chriſt hath built his church.*—Not of *regret*: for whatever partial evils may ariſe from a full diſcuſſion of a ſubject, the intereſts of truth will, doubtleſs, in the end prevail, and the prevalence of truth is a good that will outweigh all the ills that may have attended the diſcovery of it. Controverſy engages a number of perſons of different talents and turns of mind; and by this means the ſubject is likely to be conſidered in every point of light in which it is capable of being exhibited to advantage.

The point of light in which the ſubject will be conſidered in theſe Letters, namely, *as influencing the heart and life*, has been frequently glanced at on both ſides. I do not recollect, however, to have ſeen this view of it profeſſedly and ſeparately handled.

In the great controverſy in the time of Elijah, recourſe was had to an expedient by which the queſtion was decided. — Each party built an altar, cut in pieces a bullock, and laid the victim upon the wood, but put no fire under; and the God that ſhould anſwer by fire was to be acknowledged as the TRUE GOD. We cannot bring our controverſies to ſuch a criterion as this; we may bring them to one however, which, though not ſo ſuddenly, is not much leſs ſenſibly evident. The tempers and lives of men are books for common people to read; and they will read them, even though they ſhould read nothing elſe. They are indeed warranted by the ſcriptures themſelves to judge of the nature of doctrines by their holy, or unholy tendency. The true goſpel is to be known by it's being a *doctrine according to godlineſs*; *teaching* thoſe who embrace it *to deny ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in the preſent world.* Thoſe, on the other hand, *who believe not the truth*, are ſaid to *have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs. Profane and vain bablings*, as the miniſtrations of falſe teachers are called, *will increaſe*

unto

unto more ungodlineſs, and their word *will eat as doth a canker*.* To this may be added, that the parties themſelves engaged in this controverſy have virtually acknowledged the juſtice and importance of the above criterion; in that both ſides have incidentally endeavoured to avail themſelves of it. A criterion, then, by which the common people will judge, by which the ſcripture authorizes them to judge, and by which both ſides in effect agree to be judged, cannot but be worthy of particular attention.

I feel, for my own part, ſatisfied, not only of the truth and importance of the doctrines in queſtion, but alſo of their holy tendency. I am aware, however, that others think differently, and that a conſiderable part of what I have to advance muſt be on the defenſive.

" Admitting the truth, ſays Dr. Prieſtley, of a " trinity of perſons in the Godhead, original ſin, " arbitrary predeſtination, atonement by the death " of Chriſt, and the plenary inſpiration of the ſcrip- " tures, their *value*, eſtimated by their influence on " the morals of men, cannot be ſuppoſed even by " the admirers of them, to be of any moment com- " pared to the doctrine of the reſurrection of the " human race to a life of retribution; and in the " opinion of thoſe who reject them they have a very

* 1 Tim. vi. 3. Tit. ii. 12. 2 Theſ. ii. 2. 1 Tim. ii. 16, 17

" unfavourable tendency, giving wrong impreſſi-
" ons concerning the character, and moral go-
" vernment of God, and ſuch as muſt tend, if
" they have any effect, to relax the obligations of
" virtue. " *

In many inſtances Dr. Prieſtley deſerves applauſe for his frankneſs and fairneſs as a diſputant; in this paſſage, however, as well as in ſome others, the admirers of the doctrines he mentions are unfairly repreſented. They who embrace the other doctrines are ſuppoſed to hold that of ARBITRARY *predeſtination*; but this is not true. The term *arbitrary* conveys the idea of caprice, and in this connexion denotes, that, in predeſtination, according to the Calviniſtic notion of it, God reſolves upon the fates of men, and appoints them to this or that, without any *reaſon* for ſo doing. But there is no juſtice in this repreſentation. There is no decree in the divine mind that we conſider as void of reaſon. Predeſtination to death, is on account of ſin; and as to predeſtination to life, though it be not on account of any works of righteouſneſs which we have done, yet it does not follow from thence that God has no reaſon whatever for what he does. The Sovereignty of God is a *wiſe*, and not a capricious Sovereignty. If he hide the glory of the goſpel from the wiſe and prudent, and reveal it unto babes, it is becauſe *it ſeem-*

* Let. to a Philoſo. Unbel. Pt. II. p. 33, 35.

eth

eth good in his ſight. But if it ſeem good in the ſight of God, it muſt, all things conſidered, be good; for the judgment of God is according to truth.

It is ſuppoſed alſo that the admirers of the forementioned doctrines cannot, and do not conſider them as of equal importance or value with that of the reſurrection of the human race to a life of retribution. But this, I am ſatisfied, is not the caſe: for whatever Dr. Prieſtley may think, *they* conſider them, or at leaſt ſome of them, as eſſential to true holineſs; and of ſuch conſequence even to the doctrine of the reſurrection of the human race to a life of retribution, that without them ſuch a reſurrection would be a curſe to mankind rather than a bleſſing.

There is one thing however in the above paſſage wherein we all unite; and this is, that the *value*, or *importance* of religious principles, is to be eſtimated by their influence on the morals of men. By this rule let the forementioned doctrines, with their oppoſites, be tried. If either thoſe or theſe will not abide the trial, they ought to be rejected.

Before we enter upon a particular examination of the ſubject, however, I would make three or four general obſervations.

Firſt, Whatever Dr. Prieſtley, or any others have ſaid, of the immoral tendency of our principles, I

am

am perſuaded thatI may take it for granted they do not mean to ſuggeſt, that we are not good members of civil ſociety, or worthy of the moſt perfect toleration in the ſtate. Nor have I any ſuch meaning in what may be ſuggeſted concerning their's. I do not know any religious denomination of men, who are unworthy of civil protection. So long as their practices do not diſturb the peace of ſociety, and there is nothing in their avowed principles inconſiſtent with their giving ſecurity for their good behaviour, they, doubtleſs, ought to be protected in the enjoyment of every civil right to which their fellow citizens at large are entitled.

Secondly, It is not the bad conduct of a few individuals in any denomination, or congregation of chriſtians, that proves any thing on either ſide; even though they may be zealous advocates for the peculiar tenets of the party which they eſpouſe. It is the conduct of the *general body* from which we ought to form our eſtimate. That there are men of bad character who attend on our preaching, is not denied; perhaps ſome of the worſt: but if it be ſo, it proves nothing to the diſhonour of our principles. Thoſe who, in the firſt ages of chriſtianity, were not humbled by the goſpel, were generally hardened by it. Nay, were it allowed we have a greater number of *hypocrites* than the Socinians; (as it hath been inſinuated that the *hypocriſy* and *preciſeneſs* of ſome people afford matter

of

of juſt diſguſt to ſpeculative Unitarians) I do not think this any more than the other any diſhonour to our principles. The defect of hypocrites lies not ſo much in the thing profeſſed, as in the ſincerity of their profeſſion. The thing profeſſed may be excellent, and perhaps is the more likely to be ſo from it's being counterfeited; for it is not uſual to counterfeit things of no value. Thoſe perſons who entertain low and diminutive ideas of the evil of ſin, and dignity of Chriſt, muſt, in order to be thought religious by us, counterfeit the contrary; but amongſt the Socinians the ſame perſons may avow thoſe ideas, and be careſſed for it. That temper of mind which we ſuppoſe common to men, as being that which they poſſeſs by nature, need not be diſguiſed amongſt them in order to be well thought of; there are therefore no great temptations to hypocriſy amongſt them. The queſtion in hand, however, is not, What influence either our principles or their's have upon perſons who do not in reality imbibe them? but, What influence they have upon thoſe who do? *

Thirdly,

* Though Socinians be allowed, in what is ſaid above, to have but few hypocrites amongſt them; yet this is to be underſtood as relating merely to one ſpecies of hypocriſy. Dr. Prieſtley ſpeaking of Unitarians who ſtill continue in the Church of England, ſays; "From a juſt averſion to every "thing that looks like *hypocriſy* and *preciſeneſs*, they rather "lean to the extreme of faſhionable diſſipation." Yet he repreſents the ſame perſons, and that in the ſame page, as "con-

"tinu-

Thirdly, It is not the good conduct of a few individuals on either ſide that will prove any thing.

Some have adopted a falſe creed, and retain it in words, who yet never enter into the ſpirit of it, and conſequently do not act upon it. But mere dormant opinions can hardly be called principles; thoſe rather ſeem to be a man's principles which lie at the foundation of his temper and conduct.---Farther; Good men are found in denominations whoſe principles are very bad: and good men, by whatever names they are called, are more nearly of a ſentiment than they are frequently aware of. Take two of them that differ the moſt in words, and bring them upon their knees in prayer, and they will be nearly agreed.---Beſides, a great deal of that which paſſes for virtue amongſt men, is not ſo in the ſight of God, who ſees things as they are. It is no more than may be accounted for without bringing religion or virtue into the queſtion. There are motives and conſiderations which will commonly influence men living in ſociety to behave with decorum. Various occupations and purſuits, eſpecially thoſe of a mental and a religious kind, are inconſiſtent with profligacy of manners. Falſe apoſtles, the very miniſters of Satan

" tinuing to countenance a mode of worſhip, which, if they " were queſtioned about it, they could not deny to be, ac- " cording to their own principle, idolatrous and blaſphemous. " Vol. Ser. p. 96. The hypocriſy, then, to which theſe gentlemen have ſo juſt an averſion ſeems to be only of *one* kind.

Satan, are ſaid to transform themſelves into the apoſtles of Chriſt, and to appear as the miniſters of righteouſneſs; even as Satan himſelf is transformed into an angel of light.* There are certain vices which being inconſiſtent with others, may be the means of reſtraining them. Covetouſneſs may be the cauſe of ſobriety, and pride reſtrains thouſands from baſe and ignoble gratifications; in which, nevertheleſs, their hearts take ſecret and ſupreme delight. A decent conduct has been found in phariſees, in infidels, nay even in atheiſts. Dr. Prieſtley acknowleges that "An atheiſt may be "temperate, good-natured, honeſt, and in the "leſs-extended ſenſe of the word, *a virtuous* "*man*."† Yet Dr. Prieſtley would not from hence infer any thing in favour of the moral tendency of atheiſm.

Laſtly, Neither *zeal* in defence of principles, nor every kind of *devotion* ſpringing from them, will prove thoſe principles to be true, or worthy of God. Several gentlemen, who have gone over from the Calviniſtic to the Socinian ſyſtem, are ſaid to poſſeſs greater zeal for the propagation of the latter, than they had uſed to diſcover for that of the former. As this however makes nothing to the diſadvantage of their ſyſtem, neither does it make any thing to it's advantage. This may be

* 2 Cor. xi, 13, 14, 15.

† Let. to a P. U. Pt. II. p. VI.

owing, for any thing that can be proved to the contrary, to their having found a ſyſtem more conſonant to the bias of their hearts than that was which they formerly profeſſed. ----And as to *devotion*, a ſpecies of this may obtain in perſons, and that to a high degree, conſiſtent enough with the worſt of principles. We know that the goſpel had no worſe enemies than the *devout and honourable* amongſt the Jews.* Saul, while an enemy to Jeſus Chriſt, was as ſincere, as zealous, and as devout in his way, as any of thoſe perſons whoſe ſincerity, zeal, and devotion are frequently held up by their admirers in favour of their cauſe.

Theſe obſervations may be thought by ſome, inſtead of clearing the ſubject, to involve it in greater difficulties, and to render it next to impoſſible to judge of the tendency of principles by any thing that is ſeen in the lives of men. It is allowed the ſubject *has* it's difficulties, and that the foregoing obſervations are a *proof* of it: but I hope, brethren, yet to make it appear to your ſatisfaction, that whatever difficulties may, on theſe accounts, attend the ſubject, there is ſtill enough in the general temper, ſpirit, and conduct of men, by which to judge of the tendency of their principles.

I am, &c.

* Acts xiii. 50.

LETTER

LETTER II.

The ſyſtems compared, as to their tendency to convert profligates to a life of holineſs.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

YOU need not be told that a being *born again, — created in Chriſt Jeſus, — converted, and becoming as a little child,* &c. are phraſes expreſſive of a change of heart, which the ſcriptures make neceſſary to a life of holineſs here, and to eternal life hereafter. It is on this account that I begin with *converſion*, conſidering it as the origin of a holy life.

A change of this ſort was as really neceſſary for *Nicodemus*, whoſe outward character, for aught appears, was reſpectable, as for *Zaccheus*, whoſe life had been devoted to the ſordid purſuits of avarice. Few, I ſuppoſe, will deny this to be the doctrine taught in the New Teſtament. But, ſhould this be queſtioned, ſhould the neceſſity of a change of heart in ſome characters be denied, ſtill it will be allowed neceſſary in others. Now, as a change is more conpiſcuous, and conſequently more convincing, in ſuch perſons who have walked in an abandoned courſe, than in thoſe of a more ſober life, I have fixed upon the converſion of *profligates* as a ſuitable topic for the preſent diſcuſſion.

There

There are two methods of reaſoning which may be uſed in aſcertaining the moral tendency of principles. The firſt is, by comparing the nature of the principles themſelves with the nature of true holineſs, and the agreement, or diſagreement of the one with the other. The ſecond is, by referring to plain and acknowledged facts; judging of the nature of cauſes by their effects. Both theſe methods of reaſoning, which are uſually expreſſed by the terms *à priori* and *à poſteriori*, will be uſed in this and the following Letters, as the nature of the ſubject may admit.

True converſion is comprehended in thoſe two grand topics on which the apoſtles inſiſted in the courſe of their miniſtry, *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Let us then fix upon theſe great out-lines of the apoſtolic teſtimony, and examine which of the ſyſtems in queſtion has the greateſt tendency to produce them.

Repentance is a *change of mind.* It ariſes from a conviction that we have been in the wrong, and conſiſts in holy ſhame, grief, and ſelf-loathing, accompanied with a determination to forſake every evil way. Each of theſe ideas is included in the account we have of the repentance of Job. Chap. xl. 4.—xlii. 6. *Behold I am vile; what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.*

Once

Once have I ſpoken, but I will not anſwer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no farther.—I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes. It is eſſential to ſuch a change as this, that the ſinner realize the evil nature of ſin. No man ever yet repented of a fault without a conviction of the evil nature of it. Sin muſt appear *exceeding ſinful* before we can, in the nature of things, abhor it, and ourſelves on account of it. Thoſe ſentiments which wrought upon the heart of David, and brought him to repentance were of this ſort. All through the fifty firſt Pſalm we find him deeply impreſſed with the evil of ſin, and that conſidered as an offence *againſt God.* He had injured Uriah and Bathſheba, and ſtrictly ſpeaking had not injured God; yet his ſin as committed againſt God lay ſo near his heart as to ſwallow up every other conſideration.—*Againſt* THEE, THEE ONLY *have I ſinned, and done this evil in thy ſight.* It follows then, that the ſyſtem which affords the moſt enlarged views of the evil of ſin, muſt needs have the greateſt tendency to promote repentance for it.

Thoſe who embrace the Calviniſtic ſyſtem believe that man was originally created holy & happy—that of his own accord he departed from God, and became vile—that God being in himſelf infinitely amiable, he deſerves to be, and is the moral center of the intelligent univerſe—that every degree of revolt from him is rebellion againſt the general good

—that

—that if ſuffered to operate according to it's tendency, it would deſtroy the well-being of the univerſe, by excluding God, & righteouſneſs, & peace from the whole ſyſtem—that ſeeing it aims deſtruction at the infinite good, and tends to univerſal anarchy, and miſchief, it is in thoſe reſpects an infinite evil, and deſerving of endleſs puniſhment—and that in whatever inſtance God exerciſes forgiveneſs, it is not without reſpect to that publick expreſſion of his diſpleaſure againſt it which was uttered in the death of his Son.—Theſe, brethren, are ſentiments, which furniſh us with motives for ſelf-abhorrence: under their influence millions have repented in duſt and aſhes.

But thoſe, on the other hand, who embrace the Socinian ſyſtem, entertain diminutive notions of the evil of ſin. They conſider all evil propenſities in men (except thoſe which are accidentally contracted by education or example,) as being in every ſenſe natural to them,—that they were originally created with them; they cannot therefore be offenſive to God, unleſs he could be offended with the work of his own hands for being what he made it. Hence it is that Socinian writers, when ſpeaking of the ſins of men, deſcribe them in the language of palliation, language tending to convey an idea of pity, but not of blame. Mr. Belſham ſpeaking of ſin, calls it "human frailty," and the ſubjects of

it, "the frail and erring children of men." *—The following poſitions are for ſubſtance maintained by Dr. Prieſtley in his treatiſe on *Neceſſity*—"That for "aught we know, it might have been as impoſſible "for God to make all men ſinleſs and happy as to "have made them infinite" (p. 118)—that all the evil there is in ſin ariſes from it's tendency to injure the creature. (p. 122)—that if God puniſh ſin, it is not becauſe he is ſo diſpleaſed with it as in any caſe to "take vengeance" on the ſinner, ſacrificing his happineſs to the good of the whole; but knowing that it tends to do the ſinner harm, he puts him to temporary pain, not only for the warning of others, but for his own good, with a view to correct the bad diſpoſition in him. (p. 65)—that what is threatened againſt ſin is of ſuch a trifling account that it need not be an object of dread. "No ne-"ceſſarian, ſays he, ſuppoſes that any of the human "race will ſuffer eternally, but only for a time, "and that for their good." (p. 149) "And ſince "God has created us for happineſs what miſery can "we fear? If we be really intended for ultimate, "unlimited happineſs, it is no matter to a truly re-"ſigned perſon *when*, or *where*, or *how*." (p. 128) Sin is ſo trifling an affair it ſeems, and the puniſhment threatened againſt it of ſo little conſequence, that we may be quite reſigned, and indifferent whether we go immediately to heaven, or whether we firſt paſs through the depths of hell!

* Serm. on the Importance of Truth, p. 33—35.

The

—that if ſuffered to operate according to it's tendency, it would deſtroy the well-being of the univerſe, by excluding God, & righteouſneſs, & peace from the whole ſyſtem—that ſeeing it aims deſtruction at the infinite good, and tends to univerſal anarchy, and miſchief, it is in thoſe reſpects an infinite evil, and deſerving of endleſs puniſhment—and that in whatever inſtance God exerciſes forgiveneſs, it is not without reſpect to that publick expreſſion of his diſpleaſure againſt it which was uttered in the death of his Son.—Theſe, brethren, are ſentiments, which furniſh us with motives for ſelf-abhorrence: under their influence millions have repented in duſt and aſhes.

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The queſtion, at preſent, is not which of theſe repreſentations is true, or conſonant to ſcripture; but which has the greateſt tendency to promote repentance? If repentance be promoted by a view of the evil of ſin, this queſtion, it is preſumed, may be conſidered as decided.

Another ſentiment, intimately connected with the evil of ſin, and equally neceſſary to the promotion of repentance, is, *the equity and goodneſs of the divine law*. No man ever truly repented for the breach of a law, the precepts of which he conſidered as too ſtrict, or the penalties as too ſevere. In proportion as ſuch an opinion prevails it is impoſſible but that repentance muſt be precluded. Now the precept of the divine law requires us to love God with all the heart, ſoul, mind, and ſtrength, and our neighbour as ourſelves It allows not of any deviation, or relaxation, during the whole of our exiſtence. The penalty on which this holy law is enforced, is nothing leſs than the curſe of Almighty God. But according to Mr. Belſham, If God "mark and puniſh *every* inſtance of tranſgreſſion," he muſt be a "*mercileſs tyrant*," and we muſt needs be "tempted to wiſh that the reins of "univerſal government were in better hands." * Mr. Belſham, perhaps, would not deny that perfect obedience *is* required by the law, according to the plain meaning of the words by which it is expreſſed,

* Serm. p. 34.

preſſed, or that the curſe of God *is* threatened againſt every one that continueth not in *all things* written in the book of the law to do them; but then this rule is ſo ſtrict that to "mark and puniſh every inſtance" of deviation from it, would be ſevere and cruel. It ſeems then that God has given us a law the terms of which he cannot abide by; that juſtice itſelf requires him, if not to abate the precept, yet to remit the penalty, and connive at ſmaller inſtances of tranſgreſſion. I think I need not enquire how much this reflects upon the moral character, & government of God. Suffice it, at preſent to ſay, that ſuch views muſt needs preclude *repentance*. If the law which forbids "every inſtance of human folly" be unreaſonably ſtrict, and the penalty which threatens the curſe of the Almighty on every one that continueth not in *all things* therein written, be indeed cruel; then it muſt ſo far be unreaſonable for any ſinner to be required to repent for the breach of it. On the contrary, GOD himſelf ſhould rather repent for making ſuch a law, than the ſinner for breaking it!

Faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is another eſſential part of true converſion. Faith is credence, or belief. Faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is belief of the goſpel of ſalvation through his name. A real belief of the goſpel is neceſſarily accompanied with a *truſt* or *confidence* in him for the ſalvation of our ſouls. The term *believe* itſelf ſometimes ex-

preſſes that idea particularly in 2 Tim. i. 12. I know whom I have *believed*, and am perſuaded that he is *able to keep that which I have committed unto him* againſt that day. This belief or truſt, can never be fairly underſtood of a mere confidence in his veracity as to the truth of his doctine; for, if that were all, the *ability* of Chriſt would ſtand for nothing, and we might as well be ſaid to truſt in Peter, or John, or Paul, as in Chriſt, ſeeing we believe their teſtimony to be valid as well as his. Believing, it is granted, does not neceſſarily, and and in caſes, involve the idea of *truſt* which is here contended for; this matter being determined by the nature of the teſtimony. Neither Peter, nor any of the apoſtles, ever pretended that their blood, though it might be ſhed in martyrdom, would ever be the price of the ſalvation of ſinners. We may therefore credit their teſtimony, without truſting in them, or *committing* any thing, as Paul expreſſes it, *into their hands*. But Chriſt's blood *is* teſtified of, as the way, and the only way of ſalvation. He is ſaid to be *the propitiation for our ſins; and by himſelf to have purged our ſins. Through his blood we have forgiveneſs. Neither is there ſalvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we muſt be ſaved. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid*, which is Jeſus Chriſt.* Hence it follows, that to believe his teſtimony

* 1 John, iv. 10. Heb i. 3. Eph. i. 7. Acts iv. 12. 1 Cor. iii. 11.

teſtimony muſt of neceſſity involve in it a truſting in him for the ſalvation of our ſouls.

If this be a juſt repreſentation of faith in Jeſus Chriſt, we cannot be at a loſs to decide which of the ſyſtems in queſtion has the greateſt tendency to promote it, and as faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is eſſential to true converſion, we cannot heſitate in concluding which has the greateſt tendency to turn a ſinner from the evil of his ways. Not to mention, at preſent, how Socinian writers diſown an "*implicit belief*" in the teſtimony of the ſacred writers,† and how they lean on their own underſtanding, as the criterion by which ſcripture is to be tried; that which I would here inſiſt upon, is, that upon their principles all *truſt* or *confidence* in Chriſt for ſalvation is utterly excluded. Not only are thoſe principles unadapted to induce us to truſt in Chriſt, but directly tend to turn off our attention and affection from him. Dr. Prieſtley does not appear to conſider him as *the way of a ſinner's ſalvation* in any ſenſe whatever, but goes about to explain the words of Peter in Acts iv. 12. *Neither is there ſalvation in any other, &c. not of* "ſalva-" tion to eternal life, but of ſalvation, or deliver-" ance from bodily diſeaſes.* And another writer, (Dr. Harwood) of the ſame caſt, in a volume of Sermons lately publiſhed, treats the ſacred writers with

† Dr. Prieſtley's Def. of Unit. for 1787, p. 66.
* Fam. Letters, Let. XIV.

with ſtill leſs ceremony. Paul had ſaid, *Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jeſus Chriſt*; but this writer, as if he deſigned to affront the apoſtle, makes uſe of his own words in order to contradict him—"Other foundation than this can no man lay, ſays he, other expectations "are all viſionary, and groundleſs, and all hopes "founded upon any thing elſe than *a good moral* "*life*, are merely imaginary, and contrary to the "whole tenor of the goſpel." p. 193. — Whether theſe things be not aimed to raze the foundation on which the church is built; and whether this be any other than *ſtumbling at the ſtumbling-ſtone*, and a *ſetting him at nought* in the great affair for which he came into the world, let every chriſtian judge. It particularly deſerves the ſerious conſideration, not only of the above writers, but of thoſe who are any way inclined to their mode of thinking. For if it ſhould be ſo that the death of Chriſt as a propitiatory ſacrifice is the only medium through which ſinners can be accepted of God; and if they ſhould be found fighting againſt God, and rejecting the only way of eſcape, the conſequence may be ſuch as to cauſe the ears of every one that heareth it to tingle. Mean while it requires but little penetration to diſcover that whatever takes away the only foundation of a ſinner's confidence, cannot be adapted to promote it.

Chriſtian

Chriſtian brethren, examine theſe matters to the bottom, and judge for yourſelves, whether you might not as well expect grapes of thorns, or figs of thiſtles, as to ſee repentance towards God, or faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt proceeding from Socinian principles.

The foregoing obſervations ſerve to ſhew *what may be expected* from the Socinian doctrine, according to the nature of things; let us next make ſome enquiry into *matters of facts*. We may judge from the nature of the ſeed ſown what will be the harveſt; but a view of what the harveſt actually is may afford a ſtill greater ſatisfaction.

Firſt then, Let it be conſidered whether Socinian congregations have ever abounded in converſions of the profane to a life of holineſs and devotedneſs to God. Dr. Prieſtley acknowledges that "The goſpel when it was firſt preached by "the apoſtles, produced a wonderful change in "the lives and manners of perſons of all ages"* Now if the doctrine which he and others preach, be the ſame for ſubſtance as that which they preached, one might expect to ſee ſome conſiderable degree of ſimilarity in the effects. But is any thing like this to be ſeen in Socinian congregations? Has that kind of preaching which leaves out the doctrines of man's loſt condition by nature, and ſalva-

* Let. to a P. U. Pt. II. Pref. p. ix.

tion alone by grace through the atonement of Chriſt; and ſubſtitutes in their place the doctrines of mercy without an atonement, the ſimple humanity of Chriſt, the efficacy of repentance, and obedience, &c.; has this kind of preaching, I ſay, ever been known *to lay much hold of the hearts and conſciences of men?* The way in which that "wonderful change in the lives and manners of people which attended the firſt preaching of the goſpel, was effected, was, by the word preached *laying hold of their hearts.* It was a diſtinguiſhing mark of primitive preaching, that it *commended itſelf to every man's conſcience.* People could not in general ſit unconcerned under it. We are told of ſome who were *cut to the heart,* and took counſel to ſlay the preachers; and of others who were *pricked in their heart,* and ſaid, Men and brethren, what ſhall we do? But in both caſes the *heart* was the mark at which the preacher aimed, and which his doctrine actually reached. Has the preaching of the Socinians any ſuch effect as this? Do they ſo much as expect it ſhould? Were any of their hearers, by any means, to feel pricked in their hearts, and come to them with the queſtion, *what ſhall we do?* Would they not pity them as enthuſiaſts, and be ready to ſuſpect that they had been amongſt the Calviniſts? If any counſel was given, would it not be ſuch as ſhould tend to impede their repentance rather than promote it; and inſtead of directing them to Jeſus Chriſt, as was the practice of the primitive preachers,

ers, would they not endeavour to lead them into another courſe?

Socinian Writers cannot ſo much as *pretend* that their doctrine has been uſed to convert profligate ſinners to the love of God and holineſs. Dr. Prieſtley's ſcheme will not enable him to account for ſuch changes where chriſtianity has ceaſed to be a *novelty*. The abſolute novelty of the goſpel when firſt preached, he repreſents as the cauſe of it's wonderful efficacy; but in the preſent age, amongſt perſons who have long heard it, and have contracted vicious habits notwithſtanding, he looks for no ſuch effects. He confeſſes himſelf "Leſs ſoli-"citous about the converſion of unbelievers *who are* "*much advanced in life* than of younger perſons, "and that becauſe he deſpairs of the principles of "chriſtianity having much effect upon the lives of "of thoſe whoſe diſpoſitions and habits are already "formed." * Sometimes he reckons that the great body of primitive chriſtians muſt have been "Well-

* Letter to a P. U. Part II. pref. It is true Dr. Prieſtley is not here ſpeaking of the profligates amongſt nominal chriſtians, but of thoſe amongſt avowed infidels: this however makes nothing to the argument. The diſpoſitions and habits of profane nominal chriſtians are as much formed as thoſe of avowed infidels; and their converſion to a holy life is as much an object of deſpair as the other. Yea, Dr. Prieſtley in the ſame place acknowledges that "To be mere nominal chriſtians is worſe than to be no chriſtians at all."

" Well-diſpoſed with reſpect to moral virtue, even " before their converſion to chriſtianity; elſe, he " thinks they could not have been ſo ready to have " abandoned their vices, and to embrace a doctrine " which required the ſtricteſt purity and rectitude " of conduct, and even to ſacrifice their lives in " the cauſe of truth." page 167, 168. In his Treatiſe on *Philoſophical Neceſſity*, p. 156, he declares that " Upon the principles of the Neceſſarian, All late repentance, and eſpecially after " long and confirmed habits of vice, is altogether " and neceſſarily ineffectual, there not being ſuffi- " cient time left to produce a change of diſpoſition " and character, which can only be done by a " change of conduct, and of proportionably long " continuance."

I confeſs I do not perceive the *conſiſtency* of theſe paſſages with each other.—By the power of *novelty* a wonderful change was produced in the lives and manners of men; and yet the body of them muſt have been well-diſpoſed with reſpect to moral virtue, that is, they muſt have been in ſuch a ſtate as not to need any wonderful change, elſe they could not have been ſo ready to abandon their vices. — A wonderful change was produced in the lives and manners of men *of all ages*; and yet there is a certain age in which repentance is " altogether and neceſſarily ineffectual." — Inconſiſtent, however, as theſe poſitions may be, one thing is ſufficiently evident,

evident, *viz.* that the author conſiders the converſion of profligates, of the preſent age, as an object of deſpair. Whatever the goſpel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John may affirm, that according to Dr. Prieſtley affords but very little, if any, hope, to thoſe who in ſcripture are diſtinguiſhed by the name of *ſinners*, *chief of ſinners*, and *loſt*. He "does not expect ſuch converſion of profligate, "and habitually wicked men, as ſhall make any "remarkable change in their lives and characters." —"Their diſpoſitions and habits are already form-"ed, ſo that it can hardly be ſuppoſed to be in the "power of new and better principles to change "them." It cannot be unnatural, or uncandid, to ſuppoſe that theſe obſervations were made from *experience*; or that Dr. Prieſtley writes in this manner on account of his not being uſed to ſee any ſuch effects ariſe from his miniſtry, or the miniſtry of thoſe of his ſentiments.

There is a ſort of preaching, however, even ſince the days of inſpiration, and where chriſtianity hath ceaſed to be a *novelty*, which has been attended, in a good degree, with ſimilar effects to that of the apoſtles. Whatever is the cauſe, or however it is to be accounted for, there have been thoſe whoſe labours have turned many, yea many profligates, to righteouſneſs; and that by preaching the very doctrines which Dr. Prieſtley charges with being the "corruptions of chriſtianity;" and which a once

humble admirer of his attempted to ridicule. * It is well known what ſort of preaching it was that was productive of ſuch great effects, in many nations of Europe, about the time of the Reformation. Whatever different ſentiments obtained amongſt the Reformers, I ſuppoſe they were ſo far agreed, as that the doctrines of human depravity, the deity and atonement of Chriſt, juſtification by faith, and ſanctification by the influence of the Holy Spirit, were the great topics of their miniſtry.

Since the Reformation there have been ſpecial ſeaſons in the churches, in which there has been great religious concern, and multitudes have been turned from their evil ways; ſome from an open courſe of profaneneſs, and others from the mere form of godlineſs to the power of it. Much of this ſort of ſucceſs attended the labours of Perkins, Bolton, Taylor, Herbert, Hilderſham, Blackerby, Gouge, Whitaker, Bunyan, great numbers of the ejected miniſters, and many ſince their time in England; of Livingſtone, Bruce, Rutherford, M'Cullock, M'Claurin, Robe, Balfour, Sutherland, and others, in Scotland; of Franck, and his fellow-labourers, in Germany; and of Stoddard, Edwards, Buel, Tennant, and many others in America. † And what Dr. Watts, and Dr. Guyſe ſaid of the ſucceſs of Mr. Edwards, and ſome others, in America,

* See Familiar Letters, Let. xxii. P. S.

† See Gillies's Hiſtorical Collections.

America, might with equal truth have been ſaid of the reſt, "That it was the common plain proteſtant "doctrine of the Reformation, without ſtretching "towards the Antinomians on the one ſide, or the "Arminians on the other, that the Spirit of God "had been pleaſed to honour with ſuch illuſtrious "ſucceſs." Pref. to Mr. Edwards's Narrative.

Nor are ſuch effects peculiar to paſt ages. A conſiderable degree of the ſame kind of ſucceſs has attended the Calviniſtic churches in North America, within the laſt ten years; eſpecially in the States of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. * Nor is it peculiar to the Weſtern world, though they have been greatly favoured. I believe there are hundreds of miniſters now in this kingdom, ſome in the eſtabliſhed church, and ſome out of it, who could truly ſay to a conſiderable number of their auditors, as Paul ſaid to the Corinthians, *Ye are our epiſtle, known and read of all men—ye are manifeſtly declared to be the epiſtle of Chriſt, miniſtered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of ſtone, but in fleſhly tables of the heart.* There are likewiſe hundreds of congregations who might with propriety be addreſſed in the language of the ſame apoſtle to the ſame people, *And ſuch were ſome of you,* (namely, fornicators, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards,

* See Rippon's Baptiſt Regiſter for 1790, Part I. II.

ards, revilers, extortioners,) *but ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified.*—And thoſe miniſters by whoſe inſtrumentality theſe effects are produced, like their predeceſſors before-mentioned, have dwelt principally on the proteſtant doctrines of man's loſt condition by nature, and ſalvation alone by grace through the atoning blood of Chriſt; together with the neceſſity of the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. When therefore they ſee ſuch effects as the above attend their labours they think themſelves warranted to aſcribe them, as the apoſtle did, *to the name of the Lord Jeſus, and the Spirit of our God.* *

The ſolid and valuable effects produced by this kind of preaching are atteſted by the late Mr. Robinſon of Cambridge, as well as by Dr. Watts, and Dr. Guyſe. "Preſumption and deſpair, ſaid "that ingenious writer, are the two dangerous ex- "tremes to which mankind are prone in religious "concerns. Charging home ſin precludes the firſt, "proclaiming redemption prevents the laſt. This "has been the method which the Holy Spirit has "thought fit to ſeal and ſucceed in the hands of his "miniſters. Wickliffe, Luther, Knox, Latimer, "Gilpin, Bunyan, Livingſtone, Franck, Blair, "Elliot, Edwards, Whitfield, Tenant, and *all* who "who have been eminently bleſſed to the revival of "*prac-*

* 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.—1 Cor. vi. 11.

" *practical godlineſs*, have conſtantly availed themſelves of this method; and, prejudice apart, it is impoſſible to deny, that great and excellent moral effects have followed." *

Should it be alleged that Mr. Robinſon, before he died, changed his opinions in theſe matters, and reckoned all ſuch things as theſe *enthuſiaſm*: it might be anſwered, a change of opinion in Mr. Robinſon can make no change in the "facts" as he juſtly calls them, which he did himſelf the honour to record. Beſides, the effects of this kind of preaching are not only recorded by Mr. Robinſon, but by thoſe who triumph in his converſion to their principles. Dr. Prieſtley profeſſes to think highly of the methodiſts, and acknowleges they have "civilized and chriſtianized a great part of the uncivilized and unchriſtianized part of this country." Fam. Let. Let. vii. and in his volume of Sermons, page 375, he allows their preaching to produce "more ſtriking effects" than that of Socinians, and goes about to account for it.

A matter of fact ſo notorious as this, and of ſo much conſequence in the controverſy, requires to be well accounted for. Dr. Prieſtley ſeems to have felt the force of the objection that might be made to his principles on this ground, and therefore attempts to obviate it. But by what medium is this attempted?

* Tranſlation of Claude, Vol. II. page 364. Note.

attempted? The ſame principle by which he tries to account for the wonderful ſucceſs of the goſpel in the primitive ages, is to account for the effects produced by ſuch preaching as that of the Methodiſts; *the ignorance of their auditors giving what they ſay to them the force of* NOVELTY. The Doctor is pleaſed to add, "Our people having in general "been brought up in habits of virtue, ſuch great "changes in character and conduct are leſs neceſ-"ſary in their caſe." *Sermons*, p. 375.

A few remarks in reply to the above ſhall cloſe this Letter.—Firſt, If novelty be indeed that efficacious thing which Dr. Prieſtley makes it to be, one ſhould think it were deſirable every century or two, at leaſt, to have a new diſpenſation of religion.

Secondly, If the great ſucceſs of the primitive preachers was owing to this curious cauſe, is it not extraordinary that they themſelves ſhould never be acquainted with it, or communicate a ſecret of ſuch importance to their ſucceſſors? They are not only ſilent about it, but in ſome caſes appear to act upon a contrary principle. Paul, when confeſſing the ſubject matter of his miniſtry before Agrippa, ſeemed to diſclaim every thing novel, declaring that he had ſaid *none other things than thoſe which the prophets and Moſes did ſay ſhould come.* And as to the cauſe of their ſucceſs, they ſeem never to have thought of any thing but *the hand of the Lord* that

that *was with them.* Acts xi. 21. *The working of his mighty power,* Eph. i. 19.—who *cauſed them to triumph in Chriſt, making manifeſt the ſavor of his knowledge, by them, in every place.* 2 Cor. ii. 14.

Thirdly, If novelty be what Dr. Prieſtley makes it to be, the plea of Dives had much more of truth in it than the anſwer of Abraham. He pleaded that *if one roſe from the dead, men would repent*; the novelty of the thing, he ſuppoſed, muſt ſtrike them. But Abraham anſwered, as if he had no notion of the power of mere novelty; *If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded though one riſe from the dead.*

Fourthly, If the ſucceſs of the apoſtles was owing to the novelty of their miſſion, it might have been expected that at Athens, where a taſte for *hearing and telling of new things* occupied the whole attention of the people, their ſucceſs would have been the greateſt. Every body knows that a congeniality of mind, in an audience, to the things propoſed wonderfully facilitates the reception of them. Now as the goſpel was as much of a novelty to them as to the moſt barbarous nations, and they were poſſeſſed of a peculiar turn of mind that delighted in every thing of that nature, it might have been expected, on the above hypotheſis, that an harveſt of ſouls would have been gathered in. But inſtead of this the goſpel is well known to have been

been leſs ſucceſsful in this famous city than in many other places.

Fifthly, Some of the moſt ſtriking effects, both in early and later ages, were not accompanied with the circumſtance of novelty. The Sermon of Peter to the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, Acts ii. contained no *new* doctrine; it only preſſed upon them the ſame things for ſubſtance as they had heard and rejected from the lips of Chriſt himſelf; and if we might have pre-judged the iſſue by the uſual train of things, they were more likely to reject Peter's doctrine than that of Chriſt, becauſe when once a people have ſet their hands to a buſineſs, they are generally more loth to relinquiſh it, and own themſelves in the wrong, than at firſt to forbear to engage in it. And as to later times, the effects produced by the preaching of Whitfield, Edwards, and others, were many of them upon people not remarkably ignorant, but who had ſat under ſuch kind of preaching all their life, and that without any ſuch effect. The *former*, it is well known, preached the ſelf-ſame doctrines in Scotland and America, as the people were uſed to hear every Lord's-day, and that with great effect amongſt perſons of a lukewarm and careleſs deſcription. The *latter*, in his *Narrative of the Work of God in and about Northampton*, repreſents the inhabitants as having been "A rational and underſtanding people." Indeed they muſt have been ſuch, or they

they could not have underſtood the compaſs of argument contained in Mr. Edwards's *Sermons on Juſtification*, which were delivered about that time, and are ſaid to have been the means of great religious concern amongſt the hearers.—Nor were theſe effects produced by airs, and geſtures, or any of thoſe extraordinary things in the manner of the preacher, which give a kind of novelty to a ſermon, and ſometimes tend to move the affections of the hearers. Mr. Prince, in his *Chriſtian Hiſtory*, who, it ſeems, had often heard Mr. Edwards preach, and obſerved the remarkable conviction which attended his miniſtry, thus deſcribes his manner of preaching.—" He was a preacher of a low and mo-
" derate voice, a natural delivery, and without
" any agitation of body, or any thing elſe in the
" manner to excite attention, except his habitual
" and great ſolemnity, looking and ſpeaking as in
" the preſence of God, and with a weighty ſenſe of
" of the matter delivered." Gillies's Collec. Vol. II. p. 196.

Sixthly, Suppoſe the circumſtance of novelty to have great efficacy, the queſtion is, with reſpect to ſuch preaching as that of the Methodiſts, whether it has efficacy enough to render *the truth of the doctrine* of no account? The main doctrines, it is well known, that the methodiſts have taught, are *man's loſt condition by nature, and ſalvation by the atonement of Chriſt*; but theſe, according to Dr.

Prieſtley, are falſe doctrines, no part of chriſtianity, but the "corruptions of it," and "ſuch as muſt tend, if they have any effect, to relax the obligations to virtue." But if ſo, how came it to paſs that the preaching of them ſhould "civilize and chriſtianize mankind?" Novelty may do wonders, it is granted; but ſtill the nature of thoſe wonders will correſpond with the nature of the principles taught. All that it can be ſuppoſed to do, is to give additional energy to the principles which it accompanies. The heating of a furnace ſeven times hotter than uſual would not endue it with the properties of water; and waters put into the moſt powerful motion would not be rendered capable of producing the effects of fire. One would think it were equally evident that falſehood, though accompanied with novelty, could never have the effect of truth.

Once more, It may be queſtioned whether the generality of people who make up Socinian congregations ſtand in leſs need of a change of character and conduct than others. Mr. Belſham ſays, that "rational chriſtians are often repreſented as "indifferent to practical religion;" and admits "there has been ſome plauſible ground for the ac-"cuſation." Dr. Prieſtley admits the ſame thing, and they both go about to account for it in the ſame way. * Now, whether their method of ac-

counting

* Mr. Belſham's Serm. p. 32. Dr. Prieſtley's Vol. of Serm. p. 95

counting for it be juſt or not, they admit the fact; and from hence we may conclude that the generality of "rational chriſtians" are not ſo righteous as to need no repentance, and that the reaſon why their preaching does not turn ſinners to righteouſneſs, is not owing to their want of an equal proportion of ſinners to be turned.

But ſuppoſing the Socinian congregations were ſo virtuous as to need no great change of character; or if they did, ſo well-informed that nothing could ſtrike them as a novelty; that is not the caſe with the bulk of mankind amongſt whom they live. And if a great change of character may be produced by the mere power of novelty, why do not Dr. Prieſtley, and thoſe of his ſentiments go forth, like ſome others, to *the highways and hedges?* Why does not he ſurprize the benighted populace into the love of God and holineſs, with his *new* doctrines? (New he muſt acknowledge they are to them.) If a falſe doctrine, ſuch as that which the methodiſts have taught, may, through the power of novelty, do ſuch wonders, what might be expected from the true? I have been told that Dr. Prieſtley has expreſſed a wiſh to go into the ſtreets, and preach to the common people. Let him, or thoſe of his ſentiments, make the trial. Though the people of Birmingham have treated him ſo uncivilly, I hope they would meet with better treatment in other parts of the country; and if by the power

power of novelty they can turn but a few ſinners from the error of their ways, and ſave their ſouls from death, it will be an object worthy of their attention.

But ſhould Dr. Prieſtley, or any others of his ſentiments, go forth on ſuch an errand, and ſtill retain their principles, they muſt reverſe the declaration of our Lord, and ſay; *We come not to call ſinners, but the righteous to repentance.* All their hope muſt be in the uncontaminated youth, or the better ſort of people, whoſe habits in the paths of vice are not ſo ſtrong but that they may be overcome. Should they in the courſe of their labours eſpy a malefactor approaching the hour of his execution, what muſt he do? Alas, like the prieſt and the levite, they muſt *paſs by on the other ſide*: They could not ſo much as admoniſh him to repentance, with any degree of hope; becauſe they conſider "All "late repentance, and eſpecially after long and "confirmed habits of vice, as abſolutely and neceſſarily ineffectual." Happy for many a poor wretch of that deſcription—happy eſpecially for the poor thief upon the croſs, that Jeſus Chriſt acted on a different principle!

'Theſe, brethren, are matters that come within the knowledge of every man of obſervation and reflection; and it behoves you in ſuch caſes to *know not the ſpeeches of them that are puffed up, but the power.*

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

The ſyſtems compared as to their tendency to convert profeſſed unbelievers.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

SOCINIAN writers are very ſanguine on the tendency of their views of things to convert Infidels, namely Jews, Heathens, and Mahometans. They reckon that our notions of the Trinity form the grand obſtacle to their converſion. Dr. Prieſtley often ſuggeſts, that ſo long as we maintain the Deity of Jeſus Chriſt, there is no hope of converting the Jews, becauſe this will always be a ſtumbling block in their way, as claſhing with the firſt principle of their religion, *the unity of God.* Things not altogether but nearly ſimilar are ſaid concerning the converſion of the Heathens and Mahometans, eſpecially the latter. On this ſubject the following obſervations are ſubmitted to your conſideration.

With reſpect to the *Jews*, they know very well that thoſe who believe in the deity of Chriſt, *profeſs* to believe in the unity of God; and if *they* will not admit this to be conſiſtent, they muſt depart from what is plainly implied in the language of their anceſtors. If the Jews in the time of Chriſt had thought it impoſſible, or, which is ſame thing, inconſiſtent

conſiſtent with the unity of God, that God the Father ſhould have a Son equal to himſelf, how came they to attach the idea of *equality* to that of Sonſhip? Jeſus aſſerted that God was his *own Father*, and they underſtood him as making himſelf *equal with God*, and therefore ſought to kill him as a blaſphemer. John v. 18. Had the Jews affixed thoſe ideas to ſonſhip, which are entertained by our opponents; namely, as implying nothing more than ſimple humanity, why did they accuſe Jeſus of blaſphemy for aſſuming it? They did not deny that to be God's *own Son* was to be equal with the Father, nor did they alledge that ſuch an equality would deſtroy the divine unity; a thought of this kind ſeems never to have occurred to their minds. The idea to which they objected was, *that Jeſus of Nazareth was the Son of God*; and hence, it is probable, the profeſſion of this great article was conſidered in the apoſtolic age as the criterion of chriſtianity. Acts viii. 37. Were this article admitted by the modern Jews, they muſt reaſon differently from their anceſtors, if they ſcrupled to admit that Chriſt is equal with the Father.

The Jews were greatly offended at our Lord's words, and his not explaining them ſo as to remove the ſtumbling-block out of their way, may ſerve to teach us how we ought to proceed in removing ſtumbling-blocks out of the way of their poſterity. *For this cauſe they ſought to kill him— becauſe*

becauſe he had ſaid that God was his Father, MAKING HIMSELF EQUAL WITH GOD. *Jeſus ſaid, I and my Father are one. They then took up ſtones to ſtone him*; and when he told them of *many good works that he had ſhewed them,* and aſked them, *for which of thoſe works do ye ſtone me?* they replied, *for a good work we ſtone thee not, but for blaſphemy, and becauſe thou* BEING A MAN, MAKEST THYSELF GOD. John v. 18.—x. 30-33. From hence it is as plain as words can make it, that whether Jeſus Chriſt be truly God, or not, they underſtood him as aſſerting that ſo he *was*—that is, they underſtood his claiming the relation of *God's own Son,* and declaring that *He and his Father were one,* as implying ſo much. This was their ſtumbling-block.—Nor does it appear that Jeſus did any thing towards removing it out of their way. It is certain he did not ſo remove it as to afford them the leaſt ſatisfaction; for they continued to think him guilty of the ſame blaſphemy to the laſt, and for that adjudged him worthy of death. Matth. xxvi. 63-66. If Jeſus *never thought of being equal with God,* it is a pity there ſhould have been ſuch a miſunderſtanding between them—a miſunderſtanding that proved the occaſion of their putting him to death!

Such an hypotheſis, to be ſure, may anſwer one end, it may give us a more favourable idea of the conduct of the Jews than we have been wont to entertain. If it does not entirely juſtify their procedure

cedure, it greatly extenuates it. They erred, it ſeems, in imagining that Jeſus in declaring himſelf *the Son of God*, made himſelf *equal with God*; and thus, through miſtaking his meaning, put him to death as a blaſphemer. But then it might be pleaded on their behalf, that Jeſus never ſuggeſted that they were in an error in that matter—that inſtead of informing them that the name *Son of God* implied nothing more than ſimple humanity, he went on to ſay, amongſt other things, *that all men ſhould honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*. —And inſtead of diſowning with abhorrence the idea of making himſelf *God*, he ſeemed to juſtify it, by arguing from the leſs to the greater; from the image of the thing to the thing itſelf. * Now theſe things conſidered, ſhould an impartial jury ſit in judgment upon their conduct, one would think they could not, with Stephen, bring it in *murder*; to make the moſt of it, it could be nothing worſe than man-ſlaughter.—All this may tend to conciliate the Jews, as it tends to roll away the reproach that, in the eſteem of Chriſtians, lies upon their anceſtors, for crucifying the Lord of Glory: but whether it will have any influence towards their converſion, is another queſtion. It is poſſible that in proportion as it confirms their good opinion of their forefathers, it may confirm their ill opinion of Jeſus; for having, by his obſcure and ambiguous

* John v. xviii. and x. 34,—36.

ous language, given occaſion for ſuch a miſunderſtanding between them.

Nearly the ſame things might be obſerved reſpecting *heathens* and *mahometans*. We may ſo model the goſpel as almoſt to accommodate it to their taſte, and ſo we may come nearer together; but whether, in ſo doing, we ſhall not be rather converted to them, than they to us, deſerves to be conſidered. Chriſtianity may be ſo heathenized, as that a man may believe in it, and yet be no chriſtian. Were it true therefore that Socinianiſm had a tendency to induce profeſſed infidels, by meeting them as it were, half-way, to take upon them the chriſtian name, ſtill it would not follow that it was of any real uſe. The popiſh miſſionaries, of the laſt century, in China, acted upon the principle of accommodation. They gave up the main things in which chriſtians and heathens had been uſed to differ, and allowed the Chineſe every favourite ſpecies of idolatry. The conſequence was, they had a great many converts, ſuch as they were; but thinking people looked upon the miſſionaries as being more converted to heatheniſm, than the Chineſe heathens to chriſtianity.*

But even this effect is more than may be expected from Socinian doctrine amongſt the heathen. The popiſh miſſionaries had engines to work with,

* Millar's Propagation of Chriſtianity, Vol. II. p. 388-438.

which Socinians have not. They were ſent by an authority which, at that time, had weight in the world; and their religion was accompanied with pomp and ſuperſtition. Theſe are matters which, though far from recommending their miſſion to the approbation of ſerious chriſtians, yet would be ſure to recommend it to the Chineſe. They ſtripped the goſpel of all it's real glory; but then they ſubſtituted a falſe glory in it's place. But Socinianiſm, while it diveſts the goſpel of all that is intereſting and affecting to the ſouls of men, ſubſtitutes nothing in it's place. If it be chriſtianity at all, it is, as the ingenious Mrs. Barbauld is ſaid in time paſt to have expreſſed it, "Chriſtianity in the frigid zone." It may be expected, therefore, that no conſiderable number of profeſſed infidels will ever think it worthy of their attention. They will be ready to ſay, "If this be all that is meant by chriſ-"tianity, there is no vaſt difference between us; "let us therefore go on as we are."

Dr. Prieſtley however is for *coming to action*. "Let a free intercourſe be opened, ſays he, between "Mahometans and rational, that is, unitarian chriſ-"tians, and I ſhall have no doubt with reſpect to "the conſequence." *And again, "Let the Hin-"doos

* "Rational, that is, unitarian chriſtians"——Why need Dr. Prieſtley be ſo particular in informing his reader that a *rational* chriſtian ſignifies an *unitarian* chriſtian? To be ſure all the world

"doos, as well as the Mahometans, become ac-
"quainted with our literature, and have free inter-
"courſe with *unitarian chriſtians*, and I have no
"doubt but the reſult will be in favour of chriſtia-
"nity." * So then, when heathens and maho-metans are to be converted, Trinitarians like thoſe of Gideon's army, that bowed down upon their knees to drink, muſt ſit at home, and the whole of the expedition, it ſeems, muſt be conducted by uni-tarians, as by the three hundred men that lapped. Poor trinitarians! deemed unworthy of an inter-courſe with heathens! Well, if it muſt be ſo, that you muſt be denied, as by a kind of *teſt-act*, the privilege of bearing arms in this divine war, ſurely you have a right to expect that thoſe who ſhall be poſſeſſed of it, ſhould act valiantly, and do exploits. But what ground have you on which to reſt your expectations? None, except Dr. Prieſtley's good

world knew long enough ago that rationality was confined to the unitarians. Doubtleſs they are the people, and wiſdom will die with them. —— When Dr. Prieſtley ſpeaks of thoſe of his own ſentiments, he calls them "*rational chriſtians.*" When, *in the ſame page*, he ſpeaks of thoſe who differ from him, he calls them, "Thoſe who *aſſume* to themſelves the diſtinguiſh-ing title of orthodox." Conſider. on Differ. of Opin. § 3. Que-re, Is the latter of theſe names *aſſumed* any more than the for-mer? and is Dr. Prieſtley a fit perſon to reprove a body of peo-ple for aſſuming a name which implies what their adverſaries do not admit?

* Letter to a P. U. Part II. p. 116, 121.

conceit of his opinions. When was it ever known that any conſiderable number of heathens or mahometans were converted by the Socinian doctrine? Sanguine as the Doctor is on this ſubject, where are the *facts* on which his expectations are founded?

Trinitarians, however, whether Dr. Prieſtley thinks them worthy, or not, have gone amongſt the heathens, and that not many years ago, and preached what they thought the goſpel of Chriſt; and I may add, from effects that cannot be diſputed, with conſiderable ſucceſs. The *Dutch*, the *Danes* and the *Engliſh* have each made ſome attempts in the Eaſt; and I hope not without ſome good effects. If we were to call that converſion, which many profeſſors of chriſtianity would call ſo without any ſcruple, we might boaſt of the converſion of a great many thouſands in thoſe parts. But it is acknowleged that many of the converſions in the Eaſt were little, if any thing, more than a change in name. The greateſt and beſt work, and the moſt worthy of the name of converſion, of which I have read, is that which has taken place by the labours of the Anglo-Americans amongſt the natives. They have indeed wrought wonders. Mr. Elliot, the firſt miniſter who engaged in this work, went over to New-England in 1632; and, being warmed with a holy zeal for converting the natives, learned their language, and preached to them in it. He alſo, with great labour, tranſlated the Bible,

and

and ſome Engliſh treatiſes into the ſame language. God made him eminently uſeful for the turning of theſe poor heathens to himſelf. He ſettled a number of chriſtian churches amongſt them, and ordained elders over them from amongſt themſelves. After a life of unremitted labour in this important undertaking, he died in a good old age, and has ever ſince been known both amongſt the Engliſh and the natives, by the name of *The Apoſtle of the American Indians.*

Nor were theſe converts like many of thoſe in the Eaſt, who profeſſed they knew not what, and in a little time went off again as faſt as they came; no, the generality of them underſtood and felt what they profeſſed, and held out to the end of their lives. Mr. Elliot's example ſtimulated many others; ſome in his life-time, and others after his death, laboured much, and were bleſſed to the converſion of thouſands amongſt the Indians. The names and labours of Bourn, Fitch, Mayhew, Pierſon, Gookin, Thatcher, Rawſon, Treat, Tupper, Cotton, Walter, Sargeant, Davenport, Park, Horton, Brainerd, and Edwards, are remembered with joy and gratitude in thoſe benighted regions of the earth. Quere, Were ever any ſuch effects as theſe wrought by preaching Socinian doctrines?

Great things have been done amongſt the heathens of late years by the *Moravians.* In about

1733

1733 they ſent miſſionaries to *Greenland*, a moſt inhoſpitable country indeed, but containing about "ten thouſand inhabitants," all inveloped in pagan darkneſs. After the labour of ſeveral years, apparently in vain, ſucceſs attended their efforts; and in the courſe of twenty or thirty years, ſeven hundred heathens, or thereabout, are ſaid to have been baptized, and to have lived the life of chriſtians.* —They have done great good alſo in the moſt northern parts of North America, amongſt the *Eſkimeaux*; & ſtill more amongſt the negroes in the Weſt-India Iſlands, where, at the cloſe of 1788, upwards of *thirteen thouſand* of thoſe poor, injured, and degraded people were formed into chriſtian ſocieties! The Moravians, it is allowed, have, in our opinion, many things amongſt them exceptionable; yet with all theſe there appears to be a great deal of godly ſimplicity: and as to the doctrines which they inculcate, they are what we eſteem moſt evangelical. The doctrine of atonement by the death of Chriſt, in particular, forms the great ſubject of their miniſtry. The firſt perſon in Greenland who appeared willing to receive the goſpel, was an old man, who came to the miſſionaries for inſtruction. "We told "him," ſay they, "as well as we could, of the creati-"on of man, and the intent thereof, of the fall and "corruption of nature, of the redemption effected "by Chriſt, of the reſurrection of all men, and

* See Crantz's Hiſt. of Greenland.

"eternal

"eternal happineſs, or damnation." They inform us afterwards, that the doctrine of the croſs, or "of the Creator taking upon him human nature, "and dying for our ſins," was the moſt powerful mean of impreſſing the minds of the heathen, and of turning their hearts to God. On this account, they add, "We determined, like Paul, to know "nothing but Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified."

Now conſider, Chriſtian brethren, were there ever any ſuch effects as the above wrought by the Socinian doctrine? If there were, let them be brought to light. Nay, let a ſingle inſtance be produced of a Socinian teacher having ſo much virtue or benevolence in him, as to make the attempt; ſo much virtue or benevolence, as to venture amongſt a race of barbarians, merely with a view to their converſion.

But need we go to heathen nations, it may be aſked, in queſt of profeſſed unbelievers? Are there not enow in chriſtian countries? There are; and Dr. Prieſtley, perſuaded of the tendency of his principles to convert, has lately made ſome experiments upon them, as being within his reach. He has done well. There is nothing like *experiment*, in religion, as well as in philoſophy. As to talking what tendency his ſentiments *would have* upon heathens and mahometans, provided a free intercourſe could be obtained, this is all [illegible]

The beſt way to know their efficacy is by *trial*, and trial has been made. Dr. Prieſtley has addreſſed *Letters to a Philoſophical Unbeliever*, and *Letters to the Jews*. Whether this ſeed will ſpring up, to be ſure, we muſt not yet decide. Some little time after he had publiſhed, however, he himſelf acknowleged, "I do not know that my book has converted a ſingle unbeliever." * Perhaps he might ſay the ſame ſtill; and that not only of his *Letters to a Philoſophical Unbeliever*, but of thoſe *To the Jews*.

Is it not a fact that Socinian principles render men indifferent to this great object, and even induce them to treat it with contempt? The *Monthly Reviewers* in reviewing *Mr. Carey*'s late publication on this ſubject infer from his acknowlegments of the baneful influence of *wicked* Europeans in their intercourſe with heathens, and the great corruptions amongſt various denominations of profeſſing chriſtians, that if ſo, "Far better is the light "of nature as communicated to them by their "Creator, than any light that our officiouſneſs diſ-"poſes us to carry to them." † By Europeans who have communicated their vices to heathens Mr. Carey doubtleſs meant, not thoſe miniſters of the goſpel, or thoſe ſerious chriſtians who have gone

* Letter to Mr. Hammon.

† Monthly Review for Dec. 1792, page 474.

amongſt

amongſt them for their good; but navigators, merchants, and adventurers whoſe ſole object was to enrich themſelves; and though he acknowleges a great deal of degeneracy and corruption to have infected the chriſtian world, yet the qualifications which he requires in a miſſionary might have ſecured his propoſal from cenſure, and doubtleſs would have done ſo, had not the Reviewer been diſpoſed to throw cold water upon every ſuch undertaking. If indeed there be none to be found amongſt profeſſing Chriſtians but ſuch who by their intercourſe with heathens will render their ſtate worſe than it was before, let the deſign be given up; but if otherwiſe, the objection is of no force.

The Reviewers will acknowlege that great corruptions have attended the civil governments of Europe, not excepting that of our own country; and that we are conſtantly engaged in diſſenſions on theſe ſubjects: yet I have no doubt but that they could find certain individuals who if they were placed in the midſt of an uncivilized people, would be capable of affording them ſubſtantial aſſiſtance; would teach them to eſtabliſh good laws, good order, and equal liberty. Nor would they think of concluding, becauſe European conquerors and courtiers, knowing no higher motive than ſelf-intereſt, inſtead of meliorating the ſtate of uncivilized nations, had injured it, that therefore it was vain for any European to think of doing other-

wiſe. Neither would they regard the ſneers of the enemies of civil liberty and equity, who might deride them as a *little flock* of conceited politicians, or at beſt of inexperienced philanthrophiſts, whoſe plans might amuſe in the cloſet, but would not bear in real life. Why is it that we are to be ſceptical and inactive in nothing but religion?

Had Mr. Carey, after the example of Dr. Prieſtley, propoſed his *own denomination only* to open an intercourſe with heathens, the Reviewers would have accuſed him of *illiberality*; and now when he propoſes that "Other denominations ſhould engage ſeparately in promoting miſſions" this it is ſaid would be "Spreading our religious diſſenſions over the globe." How then are theſe Gentlemen to be pleaſed? By ſitting ſtill, it ſhould ſeem, and perſuading ourſelves that it is impoſſible to find out what is true religion, or if not, that it is of but little importance to diſſeminate it. But why is it, I aſk again, that we are to be ſceptical and inactive in nothing but religion?

If the opinion of the Jews may in any degree be collected from the anſwer of their champion, *Mr. David Levi*, ſo far are they from being convinced of the truth of Chriſtianity by Dr. Prieſtley's writings, that they ſuſpect whether he himſelf be a Chriſtian. "Your doctrine, ſays Mr. Levi, is ſo "oppoſite to what I always underſtood to be the principles

LETTER IV.

The argument from the number of converts to Socinianiſm examined.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IF we judge of things by *facts*, perhaps it will be found that Socinianiſm is not ſo much adapted to make converts of jews, heathens, mahometans, or philoſophical unbelievers, as of a ſpeculating ſort of people amongſt profeſſing chriſtians. Theſe in our own country, are found, ſome in the eſtabliſhed church, and ſome amongſt diſſenters. Among people of this deſcription, I ſuppoſe, Socinianiſm has gained conſiderable ground. Of this Dr. Prieſtley, and others of his party, are frequently making their boaſt. * But whether they have any cauſe for boaſting, even in this caſe, may be juſtly doubted.

In the firſt place, let it be conſidered, though Socinianiſm may gain ground amongſt ſpeculating *individuals*, yet the congregations where that ſyſtem, or what bears a near reſemblance to it, is taught, are greatly upon the decline. There are at this time a great many places of worſhip in this kingdom, eſpecially among the *Preſbyterians*, and the *General Baptiſts*, where the Socinian and Arian

* Volume of Sermons, p. 93, 94.

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doctrines have been taught till the congregations are gradually dwindled away, and there are ſcarcely enow left to keep up the form of worſhip. There is nothing in either of theſe ſyſtems, comparatively ſpeaking, that alarms the conſcience, or intereſts the heart; and therefore the congregations where they are taught, unleſs kept up by the accidental popularity of a preacher, or ſome other circumſtance diſtinct from the doctrine delivered, generally fall into decay.

But further, let us examine a little more particularly, what ſort of people they in general are who are converted to Socinianiſm. It is an object worthy of enquiry, whether they appear to be modeſt, humble, ſerious chriſtians; ſuch as have known the plague of their own hearts; ſuch in whom tribulation hath wrought patience, and patience experience; ſuch who know WHOM they have believed, and who have learned to count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowlege of Chriſt Jeſus their Lord; ſuch who, in their inveſtigation of ſentiments, have been uſed to mingle earneſt and humble prayer with patient and impartial enquiry; ſuch in fine, who have become as little children in their own eyes? *If they are*, it is a circumſtance of conſequence, not ſufficient indeed to juſtify their change of ſentiments, but to render that change an object of attention. When characters of this deſcription embrace a ſet of principles

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ciples it becomes a matter of ſerious conſideration what could induce them to do ſo. But *if they are not*, their caſe deſerves but little regard. When the body of converts to a ſyſtem are mere ſpeculatiſts in religion, men of little or no ſerioufneſs, and who pay no manner of attention to vital and practical religion, it reflects neither honour on the cauſe they have eſpouſed, nor diſhonour on that which they have rejected. When we ſee characters of this ſtamp go over to the Socinian ſtandard, it does not at all ſurprize us; on the contrary, we are ready to ſay as the apoſtle ſaid of the defection of ſome of the profeſſors of chriſtianity in his day, *They went out from us, but they were not of us.*

That many of the Socinian converts were previouſly men of no ſerious religion, needs no other proof than the acknowlegments of Dr. Prieſtley, and Mr. Belſham. "It cannot be denied" ſays the former, "that many of thoſe who judge ſo "truly, concerning particular tenets in religion, "have attained to that cool unbiaſſed temper of "mind in conſequence of becoming more indiffe-"rent to religion in general, and to all the modes "and doctrines of it." And this indifference to *all religion* is conſidered by Dr. Prieſtley as "fa-"vourable to a diſtinguiſhing between truth and "falſehood." * Much to the ſame purpoſe is what

* Vol. of Sermons, page 95.

Mr.

Mr. Belſham alleges, as quoted before, that "Men "who are moſt indifferent to the *practice* of reli- "gion, and whoſe minds therefore are leaſt attach- "ed to any ſet of principles, will ever be the firſt "to ſee the abſurdity of a popular ſuperſtition, and "to embrace a rational ſyſtem of faith." Serm. p. 32.—It is eaſy to ſee, one ſhould think, from hence, what ſort of characters thoſe are which compoſe the body of Socinian converts.

Dr. Prieſtley, however, conſiders this circumſtance as reflecting no diſhonour upon his principles. He thinks he has fully accounted for it. So thinks Mr. Belſham, and ſo think the Monthly Reviewers, in their Review of Mr. Belſham's Sermon.*

Surely

* I have not ſcrupled to claſs the *Monthly Reviewers* among Socinians. Though in a work of that kind there is frequently, no doubt, a change of hands; yet it is eaſy to ſee that of late years (a very ſhort interval excepted) it has been principally, if not entirely, under Socinian direction; and, ſo far as religion is concerned, has been uſed as an inſtrument for the propagation of that ſyſtem. Impartiality towards Calviniſtic writers is not therefore to be expected from that quarter. It is true they ſometimes affect to ſtand aloof from all parties; but it is mere affectation. Nothing can be more abſurd than to expect them to judge impartially in a cauſe wherein they themſelves are parties; abſurd however as it is, ſome perſons are weak enough to be impoſed upon by their pretences.—Perhaps the *Monthly Review* has more contributed to the ſpreading of Socinianiſm than all other writings put together.

The

Surely Socinians muſt be wretchedly driven, or they would not have recourſe to ſuch a refuge as that of acknowleging that they hold a goſpel, the beſt preparative for which is a being *deſtitute of all religion!* "What a reflection is here implied, ſays "Dr. Williams, on the moſt eminent reformers "of every age, who were the firſt to ſee the ab- "ſurdities of a popular ſuperſtition, and the falſi- "ty of reigning principles! What a poor com- "pliment to the religious character of Unitarian "reformers! According to this account one might "be tempted to aſk:—Was it by being indifferent "to the practice of religion that Mr. Belſham "was qualified to ſee and pronounce Calviniſm to "be *gloomy* and *erroneous*, an *unamiable* and *me-* "*lancholy* ſyſtem? Charity forbids us to think he "was thus qualified; and if ſo, by his own rule "he is no very competent judge: except he is "pleaſed to adopt the alternative, that he is only "the humble follower of more *ſagacious*, but *ir-*

The plan of this work does not admit of *argumentation*; a ſudden flaſh of wit is generally reckoned ſufficient to diſcredit a Calviniſtic performance; and this juſt ſuits the turn of thoſe who are *deſtitute of all religion*. A laborious inveſtigation of matters would not ſuit their temper of mind; they had rather ſubſcribe to the well-known maxim, that "Ridicule is the teſt "of truth:" and then, whenever the Reviewers hold up a doctrine as ridiculous, they have nothing to do but to join the laugh, and conclude it a "vulgar error, or a popular ſuperſti- "tion."

" *religious* guides." *Diſcourſe on the Influence of religious practice upon our enquiries after truth, in anſwer to Mr. Belſham's Sermon.* p. 6.

We read of different kinds of preparatives in the ſcriptures, but I never recollect reading any thing like the above. Zeal and attention, a diſpoſition to *ſearch* and *pray*, according to Solomon, is a preparative for the diſcovery of truth. Prov. ii. 1, 9. The piety of Cornelius, which he exerciſed according to the opportunities he poſſeſſed of obtaining light, was a preparative for his reception of the goſpel as ſoon as he heard it. Acts x. And this accords with our Lord's declaration, *He that will do his will ſhall know of his doctrine.* On the other hand, The cold indifference of ſome in the apoſtolic age, *who received not the love of the truth*, but as it ſhould ſeem, held it with a looſe hand, even while they profeſſed it, was equally a preparative for apoſtaſy. 2. Theſſ. ii. 10. We alſo read of ſome in Iſaiah's time, who " leaned " very much to a life of diſſipation"; They *erred through wine. All tables are full of vomit, and filthineſs*, ſaith the prophet, deſcribing one of their aſſemblies, *ſo that there is no place.* He adds, *Whom ſhall he teach knowlege, and whom ſhall he make to underſtand doctrine?* And what is the anſwer? " Were the men who leaned to a life of " diſſipation," who loved to ſuck at the breaſts of ſenſual indulgence, the proper ſubjects? No; *thoſe*

thoſe that were weaned from the breaſts, and drawn from the milk. Iſai. xxviii. 7, 13. But now it ſeems the caſe is altered, and in order to find out truth, the moſt likely way is to be diveſted of *all religion!*

It is true, theſe things are ſpoken of what are called "ſpeculative unitarians," whom Dr. Prieſtley calls "men of the world," and diſtinguiſhes them from "ſerious chriſtians." He endeavours alſo to guard his cauſe by obſerving, that the bulk of profeſſing Chriſtians, or of thoſe who ſhould have ranked as Chriſtians, in every age, have been of this deſcription.* It is very true there have been lukewarm, diſſipated, and merely nominal Chriſtians, in all ages of the church, and in every denomination: I ſuſpect, however, that Dr. Prieſtley, in order to reduce the ſtate of the church in general to that of the Unitarians, has rather magnified this matter. But be that as it may, there are *two* circumſtances which render it improper for him to reaſon from this caſe to the other. Firſt, Whatever bad characters have ranked with other denominations, at leaſt with ours, as to their religious creed, we do not own, or conſider them as "converts," and much leſs glory in the ſpread of our principles when men of that character profeſs to embrace them; which is what our opponents do.†

* Vol. of Serm. p. 98—100. † Vol. Serm. p. 93, 94.

If we ſpeak of converts to our principles, we diſown ſuch people, and leave them out of the account, as perſons whoſe walk and converſation, whatever be their ſpeculative opinions, diſcover them to be *enemies to the croſs of Chriſt*. But were Socinians to do ſo, it is more than probable that the number of converts of which they boaſt would be greatly diminiſhed. Secondly, Whatever irreligious characters may profeſs to imbibe our principles, we do not conſider the ſtate of mind which ſuch people poſſeſs as friendly to them. That which we account truth, is a ſyſtem of holineſs, a ſyſtem therefore which men of "no religion" will never cordially embrace.—Perſons may indeed embrace a notion about the certainty of divine decrees, and of the neceſſity of things being as they are to be, whether the proper means are uſed or not; and accordingly they may live in the neglect of all means, and of all practical religion; and may reckon themſelves, and be reckoned by ſome others, amongſt the Calviniſts. To ſuch a creed as this, it is allowed, the want of all religion is the beſt preparative: but then it muſt be obſerved, that the creed itſelf is as falſe, as the practice attending it is impure, and as oppoſite to Calviniſm as it is to ſcripture and common ſenſe. That doctrine be it what it may, to which an indifference to religion in general is friendly, cannot be the goſpel, or any thing

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pertaining to it, but ſomething very near akin to infidelity.

If it be objected, that the character of Perſons, whatever it be previous to their embracing a ſet of principles, ought not to be alleged againſt the moral tendency of thoſe principles, for if it were, Chriſtianity itſelf would be diſhonoured by the previous character of many of the primitive chriſtians—It is replied, there are two circumſtances neceſſary to render this objection of any force. Firſt, the previous character of the convert, however wicked it may have been, muſt have *no influence* on his converſion. Second, This converſion muſt have ſuch an influence on him, as, whatever has been his paſt character, his future life ſhall be devoted to God. Both theſe circumſtances exiſted in the caſe of the primitive chriſtians; and if the ſame could be ſaid of the converts to Socinianiſm, it is acknowleged that all objections from this quarter ought to give way. But this is not the caſe. Socinian converts are not only allowed, many of them, to have been men of *no religion*, but the want of religion, as we have ſeen already, is allowed to have influenced their converſion. Nor is this all; it is allowed that their converſion to theſe principles has no ſuch influence upon them as to make any material change in their character for the better. This is a fact tacitly admitted by Mr. Belſham, in that he goes about to account for it, by alleging

alleging what was their character previous to their converſion. It is true he talks of this being the caſe "only for a time," and that at length theſe converts are to "feel the benign influence of their princi-"ples, and demonſtrate the excellence of their "faith by the ſuperior dignity, and worth of their "character." But theſe it ſeems, like the "anni-"hilation of death," and the converſion of Jews and mahometans by Socinian doctrine, are things *yet to come.*

But it will be pleaded, Though many who go over to Socinianiſm are men of no religion, and continue to "lean to a life of diſſipation," yet that is not the caſe *with all*; there are ſome who are exemplary in their lives, men of eminent piety and virtue, and who are diſtinguiſhed by Dr. Prieſtley by the name of "ſerious chriſtians."* To this it is replied,

Firſt, Whatever piety or virtue there may be amongſt Socinian converts, it may be doubted whether pietyor virtue led them to embrace that ſcheme, or were much in exerciſe in their reſearches after it. It has been obſerved by ſome who have been moſt converſant with them, that as they have diſcovered a predilection for thoſe views of things, it has been very common for them to diſcover at the ſame time

* Vol. Serm. p. 98.

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a light-minded temper, ſpeaking of ſacred things, and diſputing about them with the moſt unbecoming levity, and indecent freedom; avoiding all converſation on experimental and devotional ſubjects, and directing their whole diſcourſe to matters of mere ſpeculation. Indeed, piety and virtue are in effect acknowleged to be unfavourable to the embracing of the Socinian ſcheme: for if "An indifference to religion in general be the moſt favourable to the diſtinguiſhing between truth and falſehood;" and if "Thoſe men who are moſt indifferent to the practice of religion, will ever be the *firſt* to embrace the rational ſyſtem," it muſt follow, by the rule of contraries, that piety, virtue, and zeal for religion, are things unfavourable to that ſyſtem, and that pious and virtuous perſons will ever be the *laſt* to embrace it—nay, ſome may think it very doubtful, whether they ever embrace it at all. *Serious Chriſtians*, according to the account of Mrs. Barbauld, are the moſt difficult ſort of people that Socinian writers and preachers have to deal with; for though they are ſometimes brought to renounce the Calviniſtic doctrines in theory, yet there is a ſort of leaning towards them in their hearts, which their teachers know not how to eradicate. "Theſe doctrines, ſhe ſays, it is "true among thinking people are loſing ground, "but there is ſtill apparent in that claſs called *ſe-* "*rious chriſtians* a tenderneſs in expoſing them; a

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" ſort of leaning towards them, as in walking over " a precipice one ſhould lean to the ſafeſt ſide; an " idea that they are, if not true, at leaſt good to " be believed, and that a ſalutary error is better " than a dangerous truth." *Remarks on Wakefield's Enquiry on Social Worſhip.*

Secondly, Whatever virtue there may be amongſt Socinian converts, it may be queſtioned whether the diſtinguiſhing principles of Socinianiſm have any tendency towards promoting it. The principles which they hold in common with us, namely, the reſurrection of the dead and a future life, and not thoſe in which they are diſtinguiſhed from us, are confeſſedly the great ſprings of their virtue. As to the ſimple humanity of Chriſt, which is one of the diſtinguiſhing principles of Socinianiſm, Dr. Prieſtley acknowleges that " The connexion between " this ſimple truth, and a regular Chriſtian life is " very ſlight."* " That, ſays the ſame author, " which is moſt favourable to virtue in Chriſtia- " nity, is the expectation of a future ſtate of retri- " bution, grounded on a firm belief of the hiſto- " rical facts recorded in the ſcriptures, eſpecially " the miracles, the death, and reſurrection of Chriſt. " The man who believes theſe things only, and " who together with this acknowleges an univerſal

*Vol. of Serm. p. 97.

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LETTER V.

On the Standard of Morality.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

YOU have obſerved that Dr. Prieſtley charges the Calviniſtic ſyſtem with being unfriendly to morality, "as giving wrong impreſſions concern-"ing the character and moral government of God, and as relaxing the obligations to virtue." That you may judge of the propriety of this heavy charge, and whether our ſyſtem, or his own tends moſt to "relax the obligations to virtue," it ſeems proper to enquire *which of them affords the moſt licentious notions of Virtue itſelf.* To ſuppoſe that the ſcheme which pleads for relaxation, both in the precept and the penalty of the great rule of divine government, ſhould after all, relax the leaſt, is highly paradoxical. The ſyſtem, be it which it may, that teaches us to lower the ſtandard of obedience, or to make light of the nature of diſobedience, muſt ſurely be the ſyſtem which relaxes the obligations of virtue, and conſequently is of an immoral tendency.

The eternal ſtandard of right and wrong is the moral law, ſummed up in *love to God with all the heart, ſoul, mind, and ſtrength, and to our neighbour as ourſelves.* This law is *holy juſt, and good*;

ty of Socinian congregations? Thoſe who have had the greateſt opportunity of obſerving them, ſay the contrary; Yea, they add, that the converſion of ſinners to a life of holineſs does not appear to be their aim—that their concern ſeems to be to perſuade thoſe who have *too much* religion, that leſs will ſuffice, rather than to addreſs themſelves to the irreligious to convince them of their defect. A great part of Dr. Prieſtley's Sermon on the death of Mr. Robinſon is of this tendency. Inſtead of concurring with the mind of God as expreſſed in his word, *O that my people were wiſe, that they would conſider their latter end!* the preacher goes about to diſſuade his hearers from thinking too much upon that unwelcome ſubject.

You will judge from theſe things, brethren, whether there be any cauſe for boaſting on the part of the Socinians, in the number of "converts "which, they tell us, are continually making to their principles;" or for diſcouragment on the ſide of the Calviniſts, as if what they account the cauſe of God and truth were going faſt into decline.

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look the former branch of it, and almoſt confine themſelves to thoſe duties which belong to the latter. It has been long obſerved of writers of that ſtamp, that they exalt what are called the *ſocial virtues*, or thoſe virtues which reſpect ſociety, to the neglect, and often at the expenſe of others which more immediately reſpect the God that made us. It is a very common thing for Socinians to make light of religious principle, and to repreſent it as of but little account as to our future well-being. Under the ſpecious name of *liberality of ſentiment* they diſpenſe with that part of the will of God which requires every thought to be in ſubjection to the obedience of Chriſt; and under thoſe of *candor and charity* excuſe thoſe who fall under the divine cenſure. The ſcripture ſpeaks of thoſe *who deny the Lord that bought them, bringing upon themſelves ſwift deſtruction*—and of *thoſe who receive not the love of the truth, being given up to believe a lie.* But the minds of Socinian writers appear to revolt at ideas of this kind; the tenor of their writings is to perſuade mankind that ſentiments may be accepted or rejected without endangering their ſalvation. Infidels have ſometimes complained of Chriſtianity, as a kind of inſult to their dignity, on account of it's dealing in *threatenings*; but Dr. Prieſtley in his *Letters to the Philoſophers and Politicians of France* has quite removed this ſtumbling-block out of their way. He accounts for their infidelity in ſuch a way as to acquit them of blame,

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holy, as requiring perfect conformity to God; juſt, as being founded in the ſtricteſt equity; and good, as being equally adapted to promote the happineſs of the creature, and the glory of the Creator. Nor have we any notion of the precept of the law being abated, or of a jot or tittle of it being given up in order to ſuit the inclinations of depraved creatures. We do not conceive that the law is more ſtrict than it ought to be, even conſidering our preſent circumſtances; becauſe we conſider the evil propenſity of the heart, which alone renders us incapable of perfect obedience, as no excuſe.—Neither do we plead for the relaxation of the penalty of the law upon the footing of equity; but inſiſt, that though God, through the mediation of his Son, *doth not mark iniquity, in thoſe that wait on him*, yet he *might* do ſo conſiſtent with juſtice, and that his not doing ſo is of mere grace. I hope theſe ſentiments do not tend to "relax the obligations of virtue." Let us enquire whether the ſame can be ſaid of the ſcheme of our opponents.

It may be thought that in theſe matters, in ſome of them at leaſt, we are agreed. And indeed I ſuppoſe few would care to deny in expreſs terms that the moral law, conſiſting of a requiſition to love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourſelves, is an eternal ſtandard of right and wrong. But let it be conſidered, whether Socinians in their deſcriptions of virtue and vice, do not greatly overlook

look the former branch of it, and almoſt confine themſelves to thoſe duties which belong to the latter. It has been long obſerved of writers of that ſtamp, that they exalt what are called the *ſocial virtues*, or thoſe virtues which reſpect ſociety, to the neglect, and often at the expenſe of others which more immediately reſpect the God that made us. It is a very common thing for Socinians to make light of religious principle, and to repreſent it as of but little account as to our future well-being. Under the ſpecious name of *liberality of ſentiment* they diſpenſe with that part of the will of God which requires every thought to be in ſubjection to the obedience of Chriſt; and under thoſe of *candor and charity* excuſe thoſe who fall under the divine cenſure. The ſcripture ſpeaks of thoſe *who deny the Lord that bought them, bringing upon themſelves ſwift deſtruction*—and of *thoſe who receive not the love of the truth, being given up to believe a lie.* But the minds of Socinian writers appear to revolt at ideas of this kind; the tenor of their writings is to perſuade mankind that ſentiments may be accepted or rejected without endangering their ſalvation. Infidels have ſometimes complained of Chriſtianity, as a kind of inſult to their dignity, on account of it's dealing in *threatenings*; but Dr. Prieſtley in his *Letters to the Philoſophers and Politicians of France* has quite removed this ſtumbling-block out of their way. He accounts for their infidelity in ſuch a way as to acquit them of blame,

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and enforces Chriſtianity upon them by very inoffenſive motives. Not one word is intimated as if there was any danger as to futurity, though they ſhould continue infidels, or even atheiſts till death. The only ſtring upon which he harps, as I remember, is, that could they but embrace Chriſtianity they would be much happier than they are!

If I entertain degrading notions of the perſon Chriſt, and if I err from the truth in ſo doing, my error, according to Mr. Lindſey, is *innocent*, * and no one ought to think the worſe of me on that account. But if I happen to be of opinion, that he who rejects the deity and atonement of Chriſt is not a chriſtian, I give great offence. But wherefore? Suppoſe it an error, why ſhould it not be as innocent as the former; and why ought I to be reproached as an illiberal, uncharitable bigot for this, while no one ought to think the worſe of me for the other? Can this be any otherwiſe accounted for, than by ſuppoſing that thoſe who reaſon in this manner are more concerned for their own honour, than for that of Chriſt?

Dr. Prieſtley, it may be noted, makes much lighter of error when ſpeaking on the ſuppoſition of it's being found in himſelf, than when he ſuppoſes it to be found in his opponents. He com-

* Apol. 4th Ed. p. 48.

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plains heavily of Mr. Venn, and others, "ſtriving "to render thoſe who differ from them in ſome "*ſpeculative points* odious to their fellow chriſti-"ans;" and elſewhere ſuggeſts, that "we ſhall "not be judged at the laſt day according to our "*opinions*, but our *works*; not according to what "we have *thought of Chriſt*, but as we have *obey-*"*ed his commands*;" * as if it were no diſtinguiſhing property of a good work, that it originate in a good principle; and as if the meaneſt opinion, and the moſt degrading thoughts of Jeſus Chriſt, were conſiſtent with obedience to him. But when he himſelf becomes the accuſer, inſtead of the accuſed, the caſe is altered, and inſtead of reckoning the ſuppoſed errors of the Trinitarians to be merely *ſpeculative points*, and *harmleſs opinions*, they are ſaid to be "Idolatrous, and blaſphemous." † But idolatry and blaſphemy will not only be brought into account at the day of judgement, but be very offenſive in the eyes of God. 1 Cor. vi. 2, 10. For my part, I am not offended at Dr. Prieſtley or any other Socinian, calling the worſhip that I pay to Chriſt, Idolatry and Blaſphemy; becauſe if he be only a man, what they ſay is juſt. They conſider him as no other than a man, and have an undoubted right to ſpeak what they think of my

* Conſiderations on Differences of Opinion, § III. Defence of Unitar. for 1786, p. 59. Do. for 1787, p. 68.

† Vol. of Sermons, p. 96.

principles, and my worſhip, as well as I have of their's. I only think they ſhould not trifle in ſuch a manner as they do with error, when it is ſuppoſed to have place in themſelves, any more than in their opponents.

If Dr. Prieſtley had formed his eſtimate of human virtue by that great ſtandard which requires love to God with all the heart, ſoul, mind, and ſtrength, and to our neighbour as ourſelves; inſtead of repreſenting men by nature as having "more virtue than vice," * he muſt have acknowleged with the ſcriptures, that *the whole world lieth in wickedneſs—that every thought, and imagination of their heart is only evil, continually*—and that *there is none* of them *that doeth good, no not one.*

If Mr. Belſham, in the midſt of that "marvellous light" which he profeſſes lately to have received, had only ſeen the *extent* and *goodneſs* of that law which requires us to love God with *all* our hearts, and our neighbour as ourſelves, in the light in which revelation places it; he could not have made ſo light of the nature of ſin, calling it "human frailty," and the ſubjects of it, "the "frail, and erring children of men;" nor could he have repreſented God in "marking and puniſhing "every inſtance of it, as acting the part of a mer-

* Letter to a P. U. Part I. p. 80.

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"cileſs tyrant."* Mr. Belſham talks of "Uni-
"tarians being led to form juſt ſentiments of the
"*reaſonableneſs* of the divine law, and the *equity*
"of the divine government;" but of what divine law does he ſpeak? Not of that, ſurely, which requires love to God with *all* the heart, ſoul, mind, and ſtrength; and our neighbour as ourſelves; nor of that government which threatens the curſe of God on every one that continueth not in *all things* written in the book of the law to do them; for this allows not of a *ſingle tranſgreſſion*, and puniſhes *every inſtance* of human folly, which Mr. Belſham conſiders as "mercileſs tyranny." He means to inſinuate, I ſuppoſe, that for the law to take cognizance of the very thoughts and intents of the heart, and eſpecially of *every inſtance* that occurs, is *unreaſonable*; and that to inflict puniſhment accordingly is *inequitable*. He conceives therefore of a law, it ſeems, that is more accommodated to the propenſities, or, as he would call them, frailties of the erring children of men; a law that may *not* cut off all hopes of a ſinner's acceptance with God by the deeds of it, ſo as to render an *atoning* mediator abſolutely neceſſary, and this he calls *reaſonable*; and of a government that will *not* bring every ſecret thing into judgment, nor make men accountable for *every idle word*; and this he calls *equitable*. "And this is

* Serm. page 33—35.

the "marvellous light" of Socinianiſm; this is the doctrine that is to promote a holy life; this is the ſcheme of thoſe who are continually branding the Calviniſtic ſyſtem with antinomianiſm!

If the moral law require love to God with *all* the heart, and ſoul, and mind, and ſtrength, and to our neighbour as ourſelves; it cannot allow the *leaſt degree* of alienation of heart from God, or of the *ſmalleſt inſtance* of malevolence to man. And if it be what the ſcripture ſays it is, *holy*, *juſt*, and *good*; then, though it require *all* the heart, and ſoul, and mind, and ſtrength, it cannot be too ſtrict; and if it be not too ſtrict, it cannot be unworthy of God, nor can it be "mercileſs tyranny" to abide by it. On the contrary, it muſt be worthy of God to ſay of a good law, *Not a jot or tittle of it ſhall fail.*

Dr. M'Gill, in his *Practical Eſſay on the Death of Jeſus Chriſt*, maintains that "The Supreme law-"giver determined from the beginning to mitigate "the rigour of the law, to make allowances for "human error and imperfection, and to accept of "repentance and ſincere obedience, inſtead of "ſinleſs perfection." page 252. But if this were the determination of the law-giver, it was either conſidered as a matter of *right*, or of *undeſerved favour*. If the former, why was not the law ſo framed as to correſpond with the determination of the

the law-giver? How was it eſpecially that a new edition of it ſhould be publiſhed from Mount Sinai, and that without any ſuch allowances? Or if this could be accounted for, how was it that Jeſus Chriſt ſhould declare that *not a jot, or tittle of it ſhould fail*, and make it his buſineſs to condemn the conduct of the ſcribes and phariſees, who had lowered it's demands, and ſoftened it's penalties, with a view to "make allowances for human error and imperfection?" It could anſwer no good end, one ſhould think, to load the divine precept with threatenings of cruelty. A law ſo loaded would not bear to be put in execution; and we have been taught by Dr. Prieſtley, in what he has written on the Teſt-Act, to conſider "The continuance of a "law which will not bear to be put in execution; "as needleſs and oppreſſive, and as what ought to "be abrogated."* If repentance and ſincere obedience be all that ought to be required of men in their preſent ſtate, then the law ought to be ſo framed, and allowance to be made by it for error and imperfection. But then it would follow, that where men *do* repent, and *are* ſincere, there are no errors or imperfections to be allowed for. Errors and imperfections imply a law from which they are deviations; but if we be under no law except one that allows for deviations, then we are as holy as we ought to be, and need no forgiveneſs.

* Fam Lett. Letter VI.

If, on the other hand, it be allowed that the relaxation of the law of innocence is not what we have any *right* to expect, but that God has granted us this indulgence out of *pure grace*; I would then aſk the reaſon, why thoſe gentlemen are continually exclaiming againſt our principles as making the Almighty a tyrant, and his law unreaſonable, and cruel? Is it tyrannical, unreaſonable, or cruel, for God to withhold what we have no right to expect? *

Dr. Prieſtley defines *juſtice* as being "Such a "degree of ſeverity, or pains and penalties ſo in-"flicted, as will produce the beſt effect with reſpect

* The intelligent reader who is acquainted with the different ſentiments that are embraced in the religious world, will eaſily perceive the agreement between the Socinian and Arminian ſyſtems on this ſubject. By their exclamations on the *injuſtice* of God as repreſented by the Calviniſtic ſyſtem, they both render that a *debt*, which God in the whole tenor of his word declares to be of *grace*. Neither of them will admit the equity of the divine law, and that man is thereby righteouſly condemned to eternal puniſhment, antecedently to the grace of the goſpel; or if they admit it in words, they will be ever contradicting it by the tenor of their reaſonings. This remark is abundantly exemplified by *Mr. Dan. Taylor* in his late controverſy with the author of theſe Letters. It is true, his ſyſtem differs from that of Socinians, in that he maintains the doctrine of the atonement; but then he pleads for it upon ſuch principles as muſt entirely overthrow it, and the whole grace of the goſpel with it. See this matter fully proved in *Agnoſtos's Reply to Mr. Taylor*. Lett. IV—VII. Sold by Lepard, No. 91, Newgate-Street, price *One Shilling*.

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"both to thoſe who are expoſed to them, and to "others who are under the ſame government: or, "in other words, that degree of evil which is cal- "culated to produce the greateſt degree of good; "and if the puniſhment exceed this meaſure, if in "any inſtance it be an *unneceſſary*, or *uſeleſs* ſuffer- "ing, it is always cenſured as *cruelty*, and is not "even called juſtice, but real injuſtice." To this he adds, "If in any particular caſe the ſtrict exe- "cution of the law would do more harm than "good, it is univerſally agreed that the puniſh- "ment ought to be remitted." Lett. to a P. U. Part I. p. 100, 101. With an obſervation or two on the above paſſage, I ſhall cloſe this Letter.

Firſt, That all puniſhments are deſigned for the good of the whole, and leſs, or corrective puniſh- ments for the good of the offender, is admitted. Every inſtance of divine puniſhment will be not on- ly proportioned to the laws of equity, but adapted to promote the good of the univerſe at large. God never inflicts puniſhment for the ſake of puniſhing. He has no ſuch pleaſure in the death of a ſinner as to put him to pain, whatever may be his deſert, without ſome great and good end to be anſwered by it: but that, in the caſe of the finally impenitent, this end ſhould neceſſarily include the good of the offender, is as contrary to reaſon, as it is to ſcrip- ture. It does not appear from any thing we know of governments, either human or divine, that the

good

good of the offender is neceſſarily, and in all caſes the end of puniſhment. When a murderer is executed, it is neceſſary for the good of the community; but it would ſound very ſtrange to ſay it was neceſſary for his own good; and that unleſs *his* good were promoted by it, as well as that of the community, it muſt be an act of cruelty!

Secondly, That there are caſes in human governments in which it is right and neceſſary to relax in the execution of the ſentence of the law, is alſo admitted. But this ariſes from the imperfection of human laws. Laws are general rules for the conduct of a community, with ſuitable puniſhments annexed to the breach of them. But no general rules can be made by men, that will apply to every particular caſe. If legiſlators were wiſe and good men, and could foreſee every particular caſe that would ariſe in the different ſtages of ſociety, they would ſo frame their laws as that they need not be relaxed when thoſe caſes ſhould occur. But God is wiſe and good; and, previous to his giving us that law which requires us to love him with *all* our hearts, and our neighbour as ourſelves, knew every change that could poſſibly ariſe, and every caſe that could occur. The queſtion therefore is not, "If "in any particular caſe the ſtrict execution of the "law would do more harm than good, whether it "ought not to be remitted;" but, whether an omniſcient, wiſe, and good law-giver, can be ſuppoſed

poſed to have made a law the penalty of which, if put in execution, would do more harm than good? Would a Being of ſuch a character make a law, the penalty of which ſhould, according to ſtrict equity, require to be remitted; a law which he could not in juſtice abide by, and that not only in a few ſingular caſes, but in the caſe of every individual, in every age, to whom it is given?

It is poſſible theſe conſiderations may induce you, Brethren, to think the divine law is *not* relaxed; but, be that as it may, the queſtion in hand is, what is the *moral tendency* of ſuppoſing that it is? To relax a bad law would indeed have a good effect, and to abrogate it would have a better; but not ſo reſpecting a good one. If the divine law be what the ſcripture ſays it is, ***holy, juſt***, and ***good***; to relax it in the precept, or even to mitigate the penalty, without ſome expedient to ſecure it's honours, muſt be ſubverſive of good order, and the ſcheme which pleads for ſuch relaxation muſt be unfavourable to holineſs, juſtice, and goodneſs.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

The ſyſtems compared, as to their tendency to promote morality in general.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

WHAT has been advanced in the laſt Letter on the ſtandard of morality, may ſerve to fix the meaning of the term in this. The term *morality*, you know, is ſometimes uſed to expreſs thoſe duties which ſubſiſt between men and men, and in this acceptation ſtands diſtinguiſhed from *religion*; but I mean to include under it the whole of what is contained in the moral law.

Nothing is more common than for the adverſaries of the Calviniſtic ſyſtem to charge it with immorality; nay, as if this were ſelf-evident, they ſeem to think themſelves excuſed from advancing any thing like ſober evidence to ſupport the charge. Virulence, rant, and extravagance, are the weapons with which we are not unfrequently combated in this warfare. "I challenge the whole body and "being of moral evil itſelf," ſays a late writer,* "to invent, or inſpire, or whiſper any thing blacker, or more wicked: yea, if ſin itſelf had all the

* Lewellin's Tracts, p. 292.

wit,

" wit, the tongues and pens of all men and an-
" gels to all eternity, I defy the whole to ſay any
" thing of God worſe than this. O ſin, thou haſt
" ſpent and emptied thyſelf in the doctrine of John
" Calvin! And here I rejoice that I have heard
" the utmoſt that malevolence itſelf ſhall ever be
" able to ſay againſt infinite benignity! I was
" myſelf brought up and tutored in it, and being
" delivered, and brought to ſee the evil and dan-
" ger, am bound by my obligations to God, an-
" gels, and men, to warn my fellow ſinners; I
" therefore here, before God, and the whole uni-
" verſe, recal and condemn every word I have
" ſpoken in favour of it. I thus renounce the
" doctrine as the rancour of devils; a doctrine
" the preaching of which is babling and mocking,
" it's prayers blaſphemy, and whoſe praiſes are the
" horrible yellings of ſin and hell. And this I
" do becauſe I know and believe that God is love;
" and therefore his decrees, works, and ways
" are alſo love, and cannot be otherwiſe." It were ill-ſpent time to attempt an anſwer to ſuch unfounded calumny as this; which certainly partakes much more of the ravings of infanity, than of the words of truth and ſoberneſs; yet this, according to the *Monthly Review*, is but "The
" true colouring of the doctrine of Calviniſm!"[a]

[a] Review for July 1792, p. 266.

Had any thing like this been written by a Calviniſt againſt Socinianiſm, the Reviewers would have been the firſt to have exclaimed againſt Calviniſtic illiberality.

This Gentleman profeſſes to have been a Calviniſt; and ſo does Dr. Prieſtley. The Calviniſm of the latter, however, ſeems to have left an impreſſion upon his mind very different from the above. "Whether it be owing to my Calviniſtical "education, ſays he, or my conſidering the prin- "ciples of Calviniſm as generally favourable to "that leading virtue *devotion*, or to their being "ſomething akin to the doctrine of neceſſity, I "cannot but acknowlege that, notwithſtanding "what I have occaſionally written againſt that ſyſ- "tem, and which I am far from wiſhing to retract, "I feel myſelf diſpoſed to look upon Calviniſts "with a kind of *reſpect*, and could never join in "the contempt and inſult with which I have often "heard them treated in converſation." *

But Dr. Prieſtley, I may be told, whatever good opinion he has of the piety and virtue of Calviniſts, has a very ill opinion of Calviniſm; and this in a certain degree is true: Dr. Prieſtley however would not ſay that "the preaching of that "ſyſtem was babling and mocking, i'ts prayers

* Treatiſe on Neceſſity, p. 163.

"blaſphemy,

" blaſphemy, or it's praiſes the horrible yellings of " ſin and hell;" on the contrary, he acknowleges " It's principles to be generally favourable to that " leading virtue *devotion*."

I confeſs Dr. Prieſtley has advanced ſome heavy accuſations on the immoral tendency of Calviniſm; accuſations which ſeem ſcarcely conſiſtent with the candid conceſſions juſt now quoted, and theſe I ſhall now proceed to examine. " I do not ſee, " ſays he, what motive a Calviniſt can have to " give any attention to his moral conduct. So " long as he is unregenerate, all his thoughts, words, " and actions are neceſſarily ſinful, and in the act " of *regeneration* he is altogether paſſive. On this " account the moſt conſiſtent Calviniſts never ad- " dreſs any exhortations to ſinners, conſidering " them as *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*; and there- " fore that there would be as much ſenſe and pro- " priety in ſpeaking to the dead as to them. On " the other hand, if a man be in the happy num- " ber of the *elect* he is ſure that God will, ſome " time or other, and at the moſt proper time (for " which the laſt moment of his life is not too late) " work upon him his miraculous work of *ſaving* " *and ſanctifying grace*. Though he ſhould be " ever ſo wicked immediately before this divine " and *effectual calling*, it makes nothing againſt " him. Nay, ſome think that this being a more " ſignal diſplay of the wonders of divine grace,

" it is rather the more probable that God will take " this opportunity to diſplay it. If any ſyſtem of " ſpeculative principles can operate as an axe at " the root of all virtue and goodneſs, it is this." On Neceſſity, p. 154. On this unfavourable account of Calviniſm, I would offer the following obſervations.

Firſt, If Calviniſm be an axe at the root of virtue and goodneſs, it is only ſo with reſpect to that of the " unregenerate;" which certainly does not include all the virtue and goodneſs in the world. As to others, Dr. Prieſtley acknowleges, as we have ſeen already, that our principles are " gene- " rally favourable to *devotion*;" and devotion, if it be what he denominates it, " a *leading* virtue," will doubtleſs be *followed* with other virtues correſpondent with it. He acknowleges alſo, " There " are many (amongſt the Calviniſts) whoſe hearts " and lives are in all reſpects truly chriſtian, and " whoſe chriſtian tempers are really promoted *by* " *their own views of their ſyſtem.*" On Neceſſity, p. 163, 164. How is it then, that Dr. Prieſtley " Cannot ſee what motive a Calviniſt can have to " give any attention to his moral conduct?" and why does he repreſent Calviniſm " as an axe at the " root of *all* virtue and goodneſs?" By all virtue and goodneſs he can only mean the virtue and goodneſs of wicked men. Indeed this appears plainly to have been his meaning: for, after acknowlege

knowleging that Calviniſm has ſomething in it favourable to "an habitual and animated devo-"tion," he adds; "But where a diſpoſition to "vice has pre-occupied the mind, I am very "well ſatisfied, and but too many facts might be "alleged in proof of it, that the doctrines of "Calviniſm have been actually fatal to the *remains* "*of virtue*, and have driven men into the moſt "deſperate and abandoned courſe of wickedneſs; "whereas the doctrine of neceſſity, properly un-"derſtood, cannot poſſibly have any ſuch effect, "but the contrary." On Neceſſity, p. 162. Now ſuppoſe all this were true, it can never juſtify Dr. Prieſtley in the uſe of ſuch unlimited terms as thoſe before mentioned. Nor is it any diſgrace to the Calviniſtic ſyſtem, that men whoſe minds are pre-occupied with vice ſhould miſunderſtand and abuſe it. The pureſt liquor, if put into a muſty caſk, will become unpalatable. It is no more than is ſaid of ſome who profeſſed to embrace chriſtianity in the times of the apoſtles, that they *turned the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs*. Is it any wonder that the wicked will do wickedly; or that they will extract poiſon from that which, rightly underſtood, is the food of the righteous? It is enough if our ſentiments, like *God's words*, *do good to the upright*. *Wiſdom* does not expect to be *juſtified, but of her children*. The ſcriptures themſelves make no pretence of having been uſeful to thoſe who have ſtill lived in ſin; but allow the goſpel to be *a ſavor of death*

death unto death in them that periſh. The doctrine of neceſſity is as liable to produce this effect as any of the doctrines of Calviniſm. It is true, as Dr. Prieſtly obſerves, " It cannot do ſo if it be pro-" perly underſtood," but this is allowing that it may do ſo if it be miſunderſtood; and we have as good reaſons for aſcribing the want of a proper underſtanding of the ſubject, to thoſe who abuſe predeſtination, and other Calviniſtic doctrines, as he has for aſcribing it to thoſe who abuſe the doctrine of neceſſity. Dr. Prieſtley talks of *the remains of virtue* where a diſpoſition to vice has pre-occupied the mind; and of the Calviniſtic ſyſtem being as an axe at the root of theſe remains; but ſome people will queſtion, whether virtue of ſuch a deſcription have any root belonging to it, ſo as to require an axe to cut it up; and whether it be not owing to that circumſtance that ſuch characters, like the ſtoney-ground hearers, in time of temptation fall away.

Secondly, The Calviniſtic ſyſtem is miſrepreſented by Dr. Prieſtley, even as to its influence on the *unregenerate.* In the paſſage before quoted, he repreſents thoſe perſons " Who are of the happy " number of the elect, as being *ſure* that God will " ſome time or other work upon them his work of " ſanctifying grace." But how are they to come at this aſſurance? Not by any thing contained in the Calviniſtic ſyſtem. All the writers in that ſcheme

ſcheme have conſtantly inſiſted, that no man has any warrant to conclude himſelf of the happy number of the elect, till the work of ſanctifying grace is actually wrought. With what colour of truth, or ingenuouſneſs, then, could Dr. Prieſtley repreſent our ſyſtem as affording a ground of aſſurance, previous to that event?—This is not a matter of ſmall account in the preſent controverſy; becauſe it is the point on which the immoral tendency of the doctrine wholly depends. As to the *certainty* of any man's being ſanctified and ſaved at ſome future time, this can have no ill influence upon him, while it exiſts merely in the divine mind. If it have any ſuch influence, it muſt be owing to his *knowlege* of it at a time when, his heart being ſet on evil, he would be diſpoſed to abuſe it; but this, as we have ſeen, upon the Calviniſtic ſyſtem, is utterly impoſſible; becauſe nothing ſhort of a ſanctified temper of mind affords any juſt ground to draw the favourable concluſion. —Dr. Prieſtley has alſo repreſented it as a part of the Calviniſtic ſyſtem, or however, as "the opi-"nion of ſome," that the more wicked a man is previous to God's work of ſanctifying grace upon him, the more probable it is that he will ſome time be ſanctified and ſaved. But though it be allowed, that God frequently takes occaſion from the degree of human wickedneſs to magnify his grace in delivering from it; yet it is no part of the Calviniſtic ſyſtem that the former affords any ground

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of probability to expect the latter; and whoever they are that Dr. Prieſtley alludes to as entertaining ſuch an opinion, I am inclined to think they are not amongſt the reſpectable writers of the party, and probably not amongſt thoſe who have written at all.

Thirdly, Let it be conſidered whether Dr. Prieſtley's own views of Philoſophical Neceſſity do not amount to the ſame things as thoſe which he alleges to the diſcredit of Calviniſm; or, if he will inſiſt upon the contrary, whether he muſt not contradict himſelf, and maintain a ſyſtem, which by his own confeſſion is leſs friendly to piety and humility than that which he oppoſes.—A ſtate of *unregeneracy* is conſidered by Calviniſts as being the ſame thing which Dr. Prieſtley deſcribes as "The "ſtate of a perſon who ſins with *a full conſent of* "*will*, and who *diſpoſed as he is*, is under an im- "poſſibility of acting otherwiſe; but who, as he "juſtly maintains, is nevertheleſs accountable, e- "ven though that conſent be produced by the effi- "cacy and unconquerable influence of motives. "It is only, continues he, where the neceſſity of "ſinning ariſes from *ſome other cauſe than a man's* "*own diſpoſition of mind*, that we ever ſay there is "an impropriety in puniſhing a man for his con- "duct. If the impoſſibility of acting well has a- "riſen from *a bad diſpoſition*, or *habit*, it's having "been impoſſible, *with that diſpoſition* or *habit* to

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"act virtuouſly, is never any reaſon for our for-
"bearing puniſhment; becauſe we know that pu-
"niſhment is proper to correct that diſpoſition and
"that habit." On Neceſſity, p. 63—65.—Now if it be conſiſtent to puniſh a man for neceſſary evil, as Dr. Prieſtley abundantly maintains, why ſhould it be inconſiſtent to exhort, perſuade, reaſon, or expoſtulate with him; and why does he call thoſe Calviniſts "the moſt conſiſtent," who avoid ſuch addreſſes to their auditors? If "the thoughts, words, and actions of unregene-
"rate men, being neceſſarily ſinful," be a juſt reaſon why they ſhould not have exhortations addreſſed to them; the whole doctrine of neceſſity muſt be inconſiſtent with the uſe of means; than which nothing can be more contrary to truth, and to Dr. Prieſtley's own views of things.

As to our being *paſſive* in regeneration, if Dr. Prieſtley would only admit that any one character could be found that is ſo depraved as to be deſtitute of all true virtue, the ſame thing would follow from his own Neceſſarian principles. According to thoſe principles, every man that is under the dominion of a vicious habit of mind, will continue to chuſe vice, till ſuch time as that habit is changed, and that by ſome influence from without himſelf. "If ſays he, I make any particular choice
"to day, I ſhould have done the ſame yeſterday,
"and ſhould do the ſame to morrow, provided

" there be no change in the ſtate of my mind re-
" ſpecting the object of the choice." p. 7. Nor can any perſon in ſuch a ſtate of mind be ſuppoſed to be active in the changing of it; for ſuch activity muſt imply an inclination to have it changed, which is a contradiction; as it ſuppoſes him at the ſame time under the dominion of evil, and yet inclined to goodneſs.

But poſſibly Dr. Prieſtley will not admit that any one character can be found who is utterly deſtitute of true virtue. Be it ſo, he muſt admit that in ſome characters vice has an *habitual aſcendency*; but the habitual aſcendency of vice as certainly determines the choice as even a total depravity. A decided majority in parliament carries every meaſure with as much certainty as if there were no minority. In all characters therefore where vice is predominant (and theſe muſt be the only characters who need to be regenerated) the party muſt neceſſarily be *paſſive* in the firſt change of his mind in favour of virtue.

But there are ſeaſons in the life of the moſt vicious men, in which their evil propenſities are at a lower ebb than uſual; in which conſcience is alive, and thoughts of a ſerious nature arreſt their attention; at theſe favourable moments it may be thought that virtue has the advantage of it's oppoſite, and that this is the time for a perſon to become active

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in effecting a change upon his own mind. Without enquiring whether there be any real virtue in all this; it is ſufficient to obſerve, that if we allow the whole of what is pleaded for, the objection deſtroys itſelf. For it ſuppoſes that in order to a voluntary activity in favour of virtue, the mind muſt firſt be virtuouſly diſpoſed, and that by ſomething in which it was *paſſive*; but this is giving up the the very point in diſpute.

Dr. Prieſtley often repreſents "a change of "diſpoſition and character as being effected only "by a change of conduct, and that of long con-"tinuance." On Neceſſity, p. 156. But whatever influence a courſe of virtuous actions may have upon the diſpoſition; and however it may tend to eſtabliſh us in the habit of doing good, *all* goodneſs of diſpoſition cannot ariſe from this quarter. There muſt have been a diſpoſition to good, and one too that was ſufficiently ſtrong to outweigh it's oppoſite, ere a courſe of virtuous actions could be commenced; for virtuous action is nothing but the effect, or expreſſion, of virtuous diſpoſition.—To ſay that this previous diſpoſition was alſo produced by other previous actions, is only carrying the matter a little farther out of ſight; for unleſs it can be proved that virtuous action may exiſt prior to, and without all virtuous diſpoſition, let the one be carried back as far as it may, it muſt ſtill have been preceded by the other; and in the obtaining

of this preceding diſpoſition the ſoul muſt neceſſarily have been *paſſive*.

Dr. Prieſtley labours hard to overthrow the doctrine of *immediate Divine agency*, and contends that all Divine Influence upon the human mind is through the medium of ſecond cauſes, or according to the eſtabliſhed laws of nature. "If moral "impreſſions were made upon men's minds by an "immediate divine agency, to what end, he aſks, "has been the whole apparatus of *revealed reli-* "*gion?*" *Serm. on Divine Influence.* This in effect is ſaying, that if there be laws for the operation on the human mind, every kind of influence upon them muſt be through the medium of thoſe laws; and that if it be otherwiſe there is no need of the uſe of means. But might he not as well allege, that if there be laws by which the planets move, every kind of influence upon them muſt have been through the medium of thoſe laws; and deny that the Divine Being immediately, and prior to the operation of the laws of nature, put them all in motion? Might he not as well aſk, if an immediate influence could be exerciſed in ſetting the material ſyſtem in motion, of what uſe are all the laws of nature by which it is kept in motion; as to aſk, "If moral impreſſions were made upon men's "minds by an immediate divine agency, to what "end has been the whole apparatus of revealed "religion?" Whatever laws attend the move-

ments

ments of the material ſyſtem, the firſt creation of it is allowed to have been by an immediate exertion of divine power. God ſaid, *Let there be light, and there was light*; and why ſhould not the ſecond creation be the ſame? I ſay *the ſecond creation*; for the change upon a ſinner's heart is repreſented as nothing leſs in the Divine Word, and the very manner of it's being effected is expreſſed in language which evidently alludes to the firſt creation—*God who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs hath ſhined into our hearts to give the light of the knowlege of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.*—Not only ſcripture but reaſon itſelf teaches the neceſſity for ſuch an immediate divine interpoſition in the changing of a ſinner's heart. If a piece of machinery, ſuppoſe the whole material ſyſtem, were once in a ſtate of diſorder, the mere exerciſe of thoſe laws by which it was ordained to move, would never bring it into order again, but on the contrary, would drive it on farther and farther to everlaſting confuſion.

As to *election*, Dr. Prieſtley cannot conſiſtently maintain his ſcheme of Neceſſity without admitting it. If, as he abundantly maintains, God is the author of every good diſpoſition in the human heart; (§ XI. On Neceſſity) and if, as he alſo in the ſame ſection abundantly maintains, God in all that he does purſues one plan or ſyſtem previouſly concerted; it muſt follow that wherever good diſpoſitions

diſpoſitions are produced, and men are finally ſaved, it is altogether in conſequence of the appointment of God, which, as to the preſent argument, is the ſame thing as the Calviniſtic doctrine of election.

So plain a conſequence is this from Dr. Prieſtley's neceſſarian principles that he himſelf, when writing his Treatiſe on that ſubject, could not forbear to draw it. "Our Saviour, he ſays, ſeems "to have conſidered the rejection of the goſpel by "thoſe who boaſted of their wiſdom,* and the re-"ception of it by the more deſpiſed part of man-"kind, as being the conſequence of the expreſs ap-"pointment of God. *At that time Jeſus anſwered "and ſaid, I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven "and earth, that thou haſt hid theſe things from the "wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto "babes; even ſo Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy "ſight.*" page 140.* To the ſame purpoſe in the next page but one, he obſerves, that God is conſidered as "the ſovereign diſpoſer, both of goſpel "privileges here, and future happineſs hereafter, "as appears in ſuch paſſages as 2 Theſſ. ii. 13. "*God hath from the beginning choſen you to ſalva-"tion, through ſanctification of the Spirit, and the "belief of the truth.*"

If there be any difference between that election which is involved in Dr. Prieſtley's own ſcheme, and

* Query, Were not theſe the *rational religioniſts* of that age?

that

that of the Calviniſts, it muſt conſiſt, not in the original appointment, or in the certainty of the event; but in the intermediate cauſes or reaſons which induced the Deity to fix things in the manner that he has done. He may, it is true, conſiſtent with his neceſſarian ſcheme, maintain, that where God hath appointed a ſinner to obtain ſalvation, it is on account of his foreſeen virtue; and he may plead that ſuch an election is favourable to virtue, as making it the ground or procuring cauſe of eternal felicity; while an election that is altogether unconditional, muſt be directly the reverſe. But let it be conſidered, in the firſt place, whether ſuch a view of election as this does not claſh with the whole tenor of ſcripture; which teaches us, that we are *Saved and called with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpoſe and grace given us in Chriſt Jeſus before the world began—Not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt—At this preſent time alſo there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwiſe grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwiſe work is no more work.** Secondly, If the unconditionality of election render it unfriendly to virtue,

* See alſo thoſe ſcriptures which repreſent election as the *cauſe* of faith and holineſs; which ſufficiently proves that it cannot be the *effect* of them — Particularly Epheſ. i. 3, 4. John vi. 37. Rom. viii. 22, 30. Acts xiii. 48. 1 Pet. i. 1. Rom. ix. 15, 16.

it

it muſt be upon the ſuppoſition of that view of things "which aſcribes more to God, and leſs to "man," having ſuch a tendency; which is the very reverſe of what Dr. Prieſtley elſewhere teaches, and that in the ſame performance.

As to men's taking liberty to ſin from the conſideration of their being amongſt the elect; that, as we have ſeen already, is what no man can do with ſafety or conſiſtency, ſeeing he can have no evidence on that ſubject but what muſt ariſe from a contrary temper and conduct. But ſuppoſe it were otherwiſe, an objection of this ſort would come with an ill grace from Dr. Prieſtley, who encourages all mankind not to fear, for that God has made them all for ultimate unlimited happineſs, and that (whatever be their conduct in the preſent life) to ultimate unlimited happineſs they will all doubtleſs come.

Upon the whole, let thoſe who are inured to cloſe thinking, judge whether Dr. Prieſtley's own views of Philoſophical Neceſſity do not include the leading principles of Calviniſm; but ſhould he inſiſt upon the contrary, then let it be conſidered, whether he muſt not contradict himſelf, and maintain a ſyſtem which, by his own confeſſion, is leſs friendly to piety and humility than that which he oppoſes. "The eſſential difference, he ſays, be-"tween the two ſchemes is this: the neceſſarian "believes

"believes that his own diſpoſitions and actions are "the neceſſary and ſole means of his preſent and "future happineſs; ſo that in the moſt proper ſenſe "of the words it depends entirely on himſelf whe- "ther he be virtuous or vicious, happy or miſerable. "—The Calviniſt maintains, on the other hand, "that ſo long as a man is unregenerate all his "thoughts, words, and actions, are neceſſarily ſin- "ful, and in the act of regeneration he is altoge- "ther paſſive."—On Neceſſity, p. 152, 154. We have ſeen already that the ſcheme of Dr. Prieſtly, as well as that of the Calviniſts, ſuppoſes men in the firſt turning of the bias of their hearts, to be paſſive; but allow it to be otherwiſe, allow what the Doctor elſewhere teaches, that "A change of "diſpoſition is the *effect* and not the *cauſe* of a "change of conduct"—p. 156. and that it de- pends entirely on ourſelves whether we will thus change our conduct, and by theſe means our diſpo- ſitions, and ſo be happy for ever; all this, if others of his obſervations be juſt, inſtead of promoting piety and virtue, will have a contrary tendency. In the ſame performance Dr. Prieſtley acknowleges, that "Thoſe who from a principle of religion a- "ſcribe more to God and leſs to man than other "perſons, are men of the greateſt elevation of pi- "ety." p. 107. But if ſo, it will follow that the eſſential difference between the neceſſarianiſm of Socinians, and that of Calviniſts, conſiſting in this, that the one makes it depend entirely upon a man's

ſelf whether he be virtuous or vicious, happy or miſerable, and the other upon God, is in favour of the latter. Thoſe who conſider men as depending entirely upon God for virtue and happineſs aſcribe more to God and leſs to man than the other, and ſo, according to Dr. Prieſtley, are "men of the "greateſt elevation of piety." Thoſe, on the other hand, who ſuppoſe men are dependent entirely upon *themſelves* for theſe things muſt conſequently have leſs of piety, and more of "Heathen Stoiciſm;" which as the ſame writer, in the ſame treatiſe obſerves, allows "men to pray for *external* "*things*, but admoniſhes them that, as for virtue, "it is our own, and muſt ariſe from within ourſelves if we have it at all." p. 69.

If, as Dr. Prieſtley ſays, there be "ſomething in "our ſyſtem, which, if carried to it's juſt conſequences, would lead us to the moſt abandoned "wickedneſs;" it might be expected, one ſhould think, that a looſe diſſipated, and abandoned life would be a more general thing amongſt the Calviniſts than amongſt their opponents. This ſeems to be a conſequence of which he feels the force; and therefore diſcovers an inclination to make it good. In anſwer to the queſtion, "Why thoſe perſons "who hold theſe opinions are not abandoned to all "wickedneſs, when they evidently lay them under "ſo little reſtraint? he anſwers, "This *is* often the "caſe, with thoſe who purſue theſe principles to their

" their juſt and fatal conſequences—adding, For it " is eaſy to prove that the Antinomian is the only " conſiſtent *abſolute predeſtinarian.*" Diff. of Opin. § III. That there are perſons who profeſs the doctrine of abſolute predeſtination, and who from that conſideration may indulge themſelves in the greateſt enormities, is admitted. Dr. Prieſtley however allows that theſe are " Only ſuch perſons whoſe minds " are previouſly depraved;" that is, wicked men, who *turn the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs.* Nor are ſuch examples " often " to be ſeen amongſt us; and where they are, it is commonly in ſuch people who make no ſerious pretence to perſonal religion, who have got juſt ſo much of predeſtination in their heads as to ſuppoſe that all things will be as they are appointed to be, and therefore that it is in vain to ſtrive; juſt ſo much as to look at the end, and overlook the means; but this is as wide of Calviniſm as it is of Socinianiſm. This may be the *abſolute* predeſtination which Dr. Prieſtley means, namely, a predeſtination to eternal life let our conduct be ever ſo impure, and a predeſtination to eternal death let it be ever ſo holy; and if ſo, it is granted that the Antinomian is the only conſiſtent believer in it, but then it might with equal truth be added, he is the only perſon who believes in it at all. The Calviniſtic doctrine of predeſtination ſuppoſes that holineſs of heart and life are as much the objects of divine appointment as future happineſs, and that the connection of theſe things can never be broken.

To prove that the Antinomian is the only conſiſtent believer in ſuch a predeſtination as this, may not be ſo *eaſy* a taſk as barely to aſſert it, I cannot imagine it would be very eaſy, eſpecially for Dr. Prieſtley, ſeeing he acknowleges that "The idea of "every thing being predeſtinated from all eternity "is no objection to *prayer*, becauſe all means are "appointed as well as ends; and therefore if pray-"er be in itſelf a proper means, the end to be ob-"tained by it, we may be aſſured, will not be had "without *this*, any more than without any other "means, or neceſſary previous circumſtances." * Dr. Prieſtley may allege that this is not *abſolute* predeſtination—but it is as abſolute as ours, which makes equal proviſion for faith and holineſs, or for every means of ſalvation, as this does for prayer.

Will Dr. Prieſtley undertake to prove that *a looſe, diſſipated, and abandoned life is a more general thing amongſt the Calviniſts than amongſt their opponents?* I am perſuaded he will not. He knows that the Calviniſts in general are far from being a diſſipated, or an abandoned people, and goes about to account for it; and that in a way that *ſhall reflect no honour upon their principles.* "Our "moral conduct, he obſerves, is not left at the "mercy of our opinions, and the regard to vir-"tue that is kept up by thoſe who maintain the

* Lett. to a P. U. Part I, page 111.

"doctrines

"doctrines abovementioned is owing to the influ-
"ence of other principles implanted in our nature."
Diff. of Opin. § III. Admitting this to be true, yet one would think the worſt principles will *upon the whole* be productive of the worſt practices. They whoſe innate principles of virtue are all employed in counteracting the influence of a pernicious ſyſtem cannot be expected to form ſuch amiable characters as where thoſe principles are not only left at liberty to operate, but are aided by a good ſyſtem. It might therefore be expected, I ſay again, if our principles be what our opponents ſay they are, that a looſe, diſſipated, and abandoned life would be a more general thing amongſt us than amongſt them.

I may be told that the ſame thing, if put to us would be found equally difficult; or that, notwithſtanding we contend for the ſuperior influence of the Calviniſtic ſyſtem to that of Socinus, yet we ſhould find it difficult to prove, that a looſe, diſſipated, and abandoned life is a more general thing amongſt Socinians than it is amongſt Calviniſts. And I allow that I am not ſufficiently acquainted with the bulk of the people of that denomination to hazard an aſſertion of that nature. But if what is allowed by their own writers (who ought to know them) may be admitted as evidence, ſuch an aſſertion might nevertheleſs be ſupported. "Rational
"chriſtians are often repreſented, ſays Mr. Bel-
"ſham,

"ſham, as indifferent to practical religion"—Nor does he deny the juſtice of this repreſentation, but admits that, "there has been ſome plauſible ground "for the accuſation;" and goes about to account for it, as we have ſeen in Letter IV, in ſuch a way however *as may reflect no diſhonour upon their principles.** The ſame thing is acknowleged by Dr. Prieſtley, who allows that, "A *great number* of the "Unitarians of the preſent age are only men of "good ſenſe, and without much practical religion," and that "there is a greater apparent "conformity to the world in them than is obſerva"ble in others."† Yet he alſo goes about to account for theſe things as Mr. Belſham does, in ſuch a way *as may reflect no diſhonour upon their principles.* It is rather extraordinary, that when facts are introduced in favour of the virtue of the general body of the Calviniſts, theſe are not denied, but accounted for in ſuch a way that their principles muſt ſhare none of the honour; and when facts of an oppoſite kind are introduced in proof of the want of virtue in Unitarians, theſe alſo are not denied, but accounted for in ſuch a way that their principles ſhall have none of the diſhonour. Calviniſm, it ſeems, muſt be immoral, though Calviniſts be virtuous; and Socinianiſm muſt be amiable, though Socinians be vicious. I ſhall not enquire whether theſe very oppoſite methods of ac-

* Serm. p. 32. † Vol. of Serm. p. 109.

counting

counting for facts be fair or candid; you yourſelves, Chriſtian brethren, may judge of that. It is enough for me that the facts themſelves are allowed.

If we look back to paſt ages (to ſay nothing of thoſe who lived in the earlieſt periods of Chriſtianity; becauſe I would refer to none but ſuch as are allowed to have believed the doctrines in queſtion) I think it cannot be fairly denied that the great body of holy men, who have maintained the true worſhip of God, (if there was any true worſhip of God maintained) during the Romiſh apoſtacy; and who, many of them, ſacrificed their earthly all for his name, have lived and died in the belief of the Deity and atonement of Chriſt. Our opponents often ſpeak of theſe doctrines being embraced by the apoſtate church of Rome; but they ſay little of thoſe, who, during the long period of her uſurpations, bore teſtimony for God againſt them. The *Waldenſes*, who inhabited the vallies of Piedmont, and the *Albigenſes*, who were afterwards ſcattered almoſt all over Europe, are allowed, I believe, on all hands, to have preſerved the true Religion in thoſe darkeſt of times; and it is thought by ſome expoſitors that theſe are the people who are ſpoken of in the XII Chapter of the Revelation under the repreſentation of *A woman, to whom was given two wings of a great Eagle, that ſhe might fly into the wilderneſs—and there be nouriſhed for a time*

from

from the face of the ſerpent. It was here that true religion was maintained, and ſealed by the blood of thouſands from age to age, when all the reſt of the chriſtian world were *wondering after the beaſt.* And as to the doctrines which they held, they were for ſubſtance the ſame with thoſe embraced afterwards by the Reformed churches; as is abundantly manifeſt by ſeveral of their catechiſms and confeſſions of faith which have been tranſmitted to our times.

Mr. Lindſey, in his *Apology*, has given a kind of hiſtory of thoſe who have oppoſed the doctrine of the Trinity; but they make a poor figure during the above long and dark period, in which, if ever, a teſtimony for God was needed. He ſpeaks of "Churches and Sects, as well as individuals of "that deſcription in the XIIth Century;" and it might be ſo. But can he produce any evidence of their having ſo much virtue as to make any conſiderable *ſacrifices* for God? Whatever were their number, according to Mr. Lindſey's own account, from that time till the Reformation, (a period of three or four hundred years, and during which the *Waldenſes*, and the *Wickliffites* were ſacrificing every thing for the preſervation of a good conſcience) they "were driven into corners, and "ſilence.*" That is, there is no teſtimony upon re-

* Chap. I. p. 34.

cord

cord which they bore, or any account of their having ſo much virtue in them as to oppoſe at the expenſe of either life, liberty, or property, the prevailing religion of the times.

Mr. Lindſey ſpeaks of the piety of "The famous *Abelard*;" but ſurely he muſt have been wretchedly driven for want of that important article, or he could not have aſcribed it to a man, who, as a late writer obſerves, "Could with equal facility explain Ezekiel's propheſies, and compoſe "amorous ſonnets for Heloiſe; and was equally "free to unfold the doctrine of the Trinity, and "ruin the peace of a family, by debauching his patron's niece." Robinſon's Plea.

The members of the church of England, it may be taken for granted were generally Calviniſts, as to their doctrinal ſentiments, at, and for ſome time after the Reformation. Since that time thoſe ſentiments have been growing out of repute, and Socinianiſm is ſuppoſed, amongſt other principles, to have prevailed conſiderably amongſt the members of that community. Dr. Prieſtley however is often very ſanguine in eſtimating the great numbers of Unitarians amongſt them. Now let it be conſidered, whether this change of principle has in any degree been ſerviceable to the intereſts of piety or virtue. On the contrary, did not a ſerious walking with God, and a rigid attention to morals, begin to die

away from the time that the doctrines contained in the *thirty nine articles* began to be diſregarded? * And now, when Socinianiſm is ſuppoſed to have made a greater progreſs than ever it had before, is there not a greater degree of *perjury*, and *diſſipation* of manners, than at almoſt any period ſince the Reformation?

I am not inſenſible that it is the opinion of Dr. Prieſtley, and of ſome others, that men grow better, that the world advances conſiderably in moral improvement; yea Mr. Belſham expreſſes a hope that, "In proceſs of time, the earth may revert to "it's original paradiſaical ſtate—and death itſelf "be annihilated." This however will hardly be thought to prove any thing, except that enthuſiaſm is not confined to Calviniſts. And as to men growing better, whatever may be the moral improvement of the world in general, Dr. Prieſtley ſome where acknowleges, that this is far from being the caſe with the Church of England; eſpecially ſince the times of Biſhop Burnet.

With reſpect to the *Diſſenters*, were there ever men of holier lives than the generality of the *Puritans* and *Nonconformiſts* of the laſt two centuries? Can

* The ſame ſort of people who held Calviniſtic doctrines, were at the ſame time ſo ſevere in their morals, that *Laud* found it neceſſary, it ſeems, to publiſh *The Book of Sports*, in order to counteract their influence on the nation at large.

any

any thing equal to their piety and devotedneſs to God be found amongſt the generality of the Socinians of their time, or of any time? In ſufferings, in faſtings, in prayers, in a firm adherence to their principles, in a cloſe walk with God in their families, and in a ſeries of unremitted labours for the good of mankind, they ſpent their lives.

But *faſtings* and *prayers*, perhaps, may not be be admitted as excellencies in their character. It is poſſible they may be treated with ridicule. Nothing leſs than this is attempted by Dr. Prieſtley in his Fifth Letter to Mr. Burn. "I could wiſh, "ſays he, to quiet your fears on your own account. "For the many ſleepleſs nights which your ap- "prehenſions muſt neceſſarily have cauſed you, "accompanied of courſe with much earneſt *prayer* "and *faſting*, muſt in time affect your health." Candor out of the queſtion, is this *piety?*

It is ſaid to be no uncommon thing for perſons who have been uſed to pray extempore, when they have turned Socinians, to leave off that practice, and betake themſelves to a written form of their own compoſition.—This, if I remember right, is what Dr. Watts uſed to call "Writing a Letter to Al- "mighty God, and then reading it to him." This is formal enough, and will be thought by many to afford but ſlender evidence of their devotional ſpirit; but yet one would have ſuppoſed they would

not have dared to ridicule it in others, however deſtitute of it they might be themſelves.

Dr. Prieſtley allows that Calviniſts have "Leſs "*apparent* conformity to the world, and that they "*ſeem* to have more of a real principle of religion "than Socinians." But then he thinks the other have the moſt candor and benevolence, "So as "upon the whole to approach neareſt to the pro-"per temper of chriſtianity." He "*Hopes* alſo "they have more of a real principle of religion "than they ſeem to have." Sermons, p. 100, 101. As to candor and benevolence, theſe will be conſidered in another Letter; at preſent it is ſufficient to obſerve, that Dr. Prieſtley, like Mr. Belſham on a change of character in his converts, is obliged to have recourſe to *hope*, and to judge of things contrary to what they *appear* in the lives of men, in order to ſupport the religious character of his party.

That a large proportion of ſerious people are to be found amongſt the Calviniſts Dr. Prieſtley will not deny; but *Mrs. Barbauld* goes farther: ſhe acknowleges in effect that the ſerioufneſs that is to be found amongſt Socinians themſelves is accompanied by a kind of ſecret attachment to our principles; an attachment which their preachers and writers it ſeems have hitherto laboured in vain to eradicate. "Theſe doctrines, ſhe ſays, it is true "among

"among thinking people are loſing ground, but "there is ſtill apparent in that claſs called *ſerious* "*chriſtians* a tenderneſs in expoſing them; a ſort "of leaning towards them, as in walking over a "precipice one ſhould lean to the ſafeſt ſide; an "idea that they are, if not true, at leaſt good to "be believed, and that a ſalutary error is better "than a dangerous truth," By the "claſs called "ſerious Chriſtians" Mrs. Barbauld cannot mean profeſſed Calviniſts; for they have no notion of leaning towards any ſyſtem as a ſyſtem of ſalutary error, but conſider that to which they are attached as being the truth. She muſt therefore intend to deſcribe the ſerious part of the people of her own profeſſion. We are much obliged to Mrs. Barbauld for this important piece of information. We might not ſo readily have known, but for this, that the hearts and conſciences of the *ſerious part* of Socinians revolt at their own principles; and that though they have rejected what we eſteem the great doctrines of the goſpel in theory, yet they have an inward leaning towards them as the only ſafe ground on which to reſt their hopes. According to this account it ſhould ſeem that *ſerious Chriſtians* are known by their predilection for Calviniſtic doctrines; and that thoſe "*thinking people* amongſt "whom theſe doctrines are loſing ground," are not of that claſs, or deſcription, being diſtinguiſhed from them. Well, it does not ſurprize us to hear that "Thoſe men who are the moſt indifferent to practical

"practical religion are the *firſt*, and ſerious chriſ-
"tians the *laſt* to embrace the rational ſyſtem;"
becauſe it is no more than might be expected; if there be any thing ſurprizing in the affair, it is that thoſe who make theſe acknowlegements ſhould yet boaſt of their principles on account of their moral tendency.

I am, &c.

LET-

LETTER VII.

The Syſtems compared as to their tendency to promote Love to God.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

OUR opponents, as you have doubtleſs obſerved, are as bold in their aſſertions, as they are liberal in their accuſations. Dr. Prieſtley not only aſſerts that the Calviniſtic ſyſtem is "Unfavourable to genuine piety, but to *every branch of vital practical religion.*" Diff. of Opin. § III. We have conſidered in the foregoing Letter what relates to morality and piety in general; in the following Letters we ſhall deſcend to particulars, and enquire under the ſeveral ſpecific virtues of chriſtianity, which of the ſyſtems in queſtion is the moſt unfavourable to them.

I begin with the ſubject of LOVE. The love of God and our neighbour, not only contains the ſum of the moral law, but the ſpirit of true religion. It muſt therefore afford a ſtrong preſumption for or againſt a ſyſtem, as it is found to promote or diminiſh theſe cardinal virtues of the chriſtian character. On both theſe topics we are principally engaged in the defenſive, as our views of things ſtand charged with being unfavourable to the love of

of both God and man. "There is ſomething in "your ſyſtem of chriſtianity," ſays Dr. Prieſtley in his Letters to Mr. Burn, "that debaſes the pure "ſpirit of it, and does not conſiſt with either the perfect veneration of the divine character, which "is the foundation of true devotion to God; or "perfect candor and benevolence to man." A very ſerious charge, and could it be ſubſtantiated, it would doubtleſs afford a ſtrong preſumption, if not more than preſumption, againſt us. But let the ſubject be examined. This Letter will be devoted to the firſt part of this heavy charge, and the following one to the laſt.

As to the queſtion, Whether we feel a veneration for the divine character; I ſhould think we ourſelves muſt be the beſt judges. All that Dr. Prieſtley can know of the matter is, that *he* could not feel a perfect veneration for a Being of ſuch a character as we ſuppoſe the Almighty to ſuſtain. That, however, may be true, and yet nothing reſult from it unfavourable to our principles. It is not impoſſible that Dr. Prieſtley ſhould be of ſuch a temper of mind as incapacitates him for admiring, venerating, or loving God in his true character; and hence he may be led to think, that all who entertain ſuch and ſuch ideas of God, muſt be void of that perfect veneration for him which he ſuppoſes himſelf to feel. The true character of God, as revealed in the ſcriptures, muſt be taken into the account

account in determining whether our love to God be genuine or not. We may clothe the Divine Being with ſuch attributes, and ſuch only, as will ſuit our depraved taſte; and then it will be no difficult thing to fall down and worſhip him; but this is not the love of God, but of an idol of our own creating.

The principal objections to the Calviniſtic ſyſtem as tending to promote the love of God, are taken from the four following topics—The atonement, the vindictive character of God, the glory of God rather than the happineſs of creatures being his laſt end in creation, and the worſhip paid to Jeſus Chriſt.

Firſt, The doctrine of atonement, as held by the Calviniſts, is often repreſented by Dr. Prieſtley as detracting from the *goodneſs* of God, and as inconſiſtent with his *natural placability*. He ſeems always to conſider this doctrine as originating in the want of love, or at leaſt, of a ſufficient degree of love, as though God could not find in his heart to ſhew mercy without a price being paid for it. "Even the elect, ſays he, according to their ſyſ-"tem, cannot be ſaved till the utmoſt effects of "the divine wrath have been ſuffered for them by "an innocent perſon." Diff. of Opin. § III. On this ſubject, a Calviniſt might without preſumption adopt the language of our Lord to the

Jews, *I honour my Father, and ye do diſhonour me.* Nothing can well be a greater miſrepreſentation of our ſentiments than this which is conſtantly given. Dr. Prieſtley cannot be ignorant, that Calviniſts diſavow conſidering the death of Chriſt as a *cauſe* of divine love or goodneſs; on the contrary, they ever admit that divine love is the cauſe, the firſt cauſe of our ſalvation, and of the death of Chriſt to that end. They would not ſcruple to allow that God had love enough in his heart to ſave ſinners without the death of his Son, had it been conſiſtent with righteouſneſs; but that as receiving them to favour without ſome publick expreſſion of diſpleaſure againſt their ſin, would have been a diſhonour to his government, and have afforded an encouragement for others to follow their example; *the love of God wrought in a way of righteouſneſs*, firſt giving his only begotten Son to become a ſacrifice, and then pouring forth all the fulneſs of his heart through that appointed medium. The incapacity of God to ſhew mercy without an atonement, is no other than that of a righteous governor; who, whatever good-will he may bear to an offender, cannot admit the thought of paſſing by the offence without ſome publick expreſſion of his diſpleaſure againſt it; that, while mercy triumphs, it may not be at the expence of law and equity, and of the general good.

So far as I underſtand it, this is the light in which

which Calviniſts conſider the ſubject. Judge, then, chriſtian brethren, whether this view of things repreſents the divine Being as *naturally implacable*; whether the gift of Chriſt to die for us be not the ſtrongeſt expreſſion of the contrary; and whether this, or the ſyſtem which it oppoſes, "gives wrong "impreſſions concerning the character and moral "government of God." Yea, brethren, I appeal to your own hearts, whether that way of ſaving ſinners through an atonement, in which mercy and truth meet together, righteouſneſs and peace embrace each other; in which God is *juſt, and the juſtifier of him that believeth in Jeſus*, does not endear his name to you more than any other repreſentation of him that was ever preſented to your minds. Were it poſſible for your ſouls to be ſaved in any other way, for the divine law to be relaxed, or it's penalty remitted without reſpect to an atonement; would there not be a virtual reflection caſt upon the divine character? Would it not appear as if he had enacted a law that was ſo rigourous as to require a repeal, and iſſued threatenings that he was obliged to retract? or at leaſt, that he had formed a ſyſtem of government without conſidering the circumſtances in which his ſubjects would be involved; a ſyſtem "The ſtrict execution of "which would do more harm than good;" yea, and as if the Almighty on this account were aſhamed to maintain it, and yet had not virtue enough to acknowlege the remiſſion to be an act of *juſtice*,

but muſt all along call it by the name of *grace*? And would not the thought of ſuch a reflection deſtroy the bliſs of heaven, and ſtamp ſuch an impreſſion of *meanneſs* upon that character whom you are taught to adore, as would almoſt incapacitate you for revering or loving him?

But Secondly, It is farther objected that according to the Calviniſtic ſyſtem, God is *a vindictive Being*, and that as ſuch we cannot love him. It is ſaid that we "Repreſent God in ſuch a light that "no earthly parent could imitate him without ſuſ-"taining a character ſhocking to mankind." That there is a mixture of the vindictive in the Calviniſtic ſyſtem, is allowed: but let it be cloſely conſidered, whether this be any diſparagement to it; nay, rather, whether it be not neceſſary to it's perfection. The iſſue in this caſe entirely depends upon the queſtion, Whether vindictive juſtice be in itſelf amiable? If it be, it cannot render any ſyſtem unamiable, "We are neither amuſed nor edified, "ſays a *Monthly Reviewer*, by the coruſcations of "damnation. Nor can we by any means bring "ourſelves to think with the late Mr. Edwards, "that the vindictive juſtice of God is a glorious "attribute."* This however may be very true, and vindictive juſtice be a glorious attribute notſtanding.

* Rev. of Edwards's XXXIII Sermons, for Mar. 1791.

I believe

I believe it is very common for people, when they ſpeak of vindictive puniſhment, to mean that kind of puniſhment which is inflicted from a wrathful diſpoſition, or a diſpoſition to puniſh for the pleaſure of puniſhing. And if this be the meaning of our opponents, we have no diſpute with them. We do not ſuppoſe the Almighty to puniſh ſinners for the ſake of putting them to pain. Neither the language of the ſcripture, nor the ſyſtem of Calviniſts, conveys any ſuch idea. Vindictive puniſhment as it is here defended ſtands oppoſed to that puniſhment which is merely *corrective*; the one is exerciſed for the good of the party; the other not ſo, but for the good of the community. Th ſe who deny this laſt to be amiable in God, muſt found their denial either on ſcripture-teſtimony, or on the nature and fitneſs of things. As to the *former*, the ſcriptures will hardly be ſuppoſed to repreſent God as an unamiable Being; if therefore they teach that vindictive juſtice is an unamiable attribute, it muſt be maintained that they never aſcribe that attribute to God. But with what colour of evidence can this be alleged? Surely, not from ſuch language as the following: *The Lord thy God is a conſuming fire, even a jealous God. Our God is a conſuming fire. God is jealous, and the Lord* REVENGETH, *the Lord* REVENGETH, *and is furious, the Lord will take* VENGEANCE *on his adverſaries; and he reſerveth wrath for his enemies. Who can ſtand before his indignation? and who*

who can abide in the fierceneſs of his anger? his fury his poured out like fire. O Lord God, to whom VENGEANCE *belongeth: O God, to whom* VENGEANCE *belongeth, ſhew thyſelf! He that ſheweth no mercy ſhall have judgment without mercy. He that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will ſhew them no favour. For we know him that hath ſaid,* VENGEANCE *belongeth unto me, I will recompenſe ſaith the Lord. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. I lift my hand to heaven, and ſay, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering ſword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render* VENGEANCE *to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. The angels which kept not their firſt eſtate, he hath reſerved in everlaſting chains, under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day. Sodom, and Gomorrha, and the cities about them—are ſet forth for an example, ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire. The Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking* VENGEANCE *on them that know not God, and that obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.**

As to *the nature and fitneſs of things*, we cannot draw any concluſion againſt the lovelineſs of vindictive juſtice, as a *divine* attribute, unleſs the

* Deut. iv. 24. Heb. xii. 29. Nahum, i. 2, 6. Pſal. xciv. 1. James, ii. 13. Iſai. xxvii. 11. Heb. x. 30, 31. Deut. xxxii. 40, 41. Jude, 6. 7. 2 Theſ, i. 8.

thing

thing itſelf can be proved to be unlovely. But this is contrary to the common ſenſe and practice of all mankind. There is no nation or people under heaven, but what conſider it in various caſes as both neceſſary and lovely. It is true, they would deſpiſe and abhor a cruel magiſtrate, who ſhould puniſh beyond deſert; or who ſhould avail himſelf of the laws of his country to gratify his own private caprice or revenge. This, however, is not vindictive juſtice, but manifeſt injuſtice. No conſiderate citizen, who values the publick weal, could blame a magiſtrate for putting the penal laws of his country ſo far in execution, as ſhould be neceſſary for the true honour of good government, the ſupport of good order, and the determent of wicked men. When the inhabitants of Gibeah requeſted, that the levite might be brought out to them that they might *know him*; and on their requeſt not being granted, abuſed and murdered his companion; all Iſrael, as one man, not only condemned the action, but called upon the Benjamites to deliver up the criminals to juſtice. Had the Benjamites complied with their requeſt, and had thoſe ſons of Belial been put to death, not for their own good, but for the good of the community at large, where had been the unlovelineſs of the procedure? On the contrary, ſuch a conduct muſt have recommended itſelf to the heart of every friend of righteouſneſs in the univerſe, as well as have prevented the ſhocking effuſion of blood which followed

followed their refuſal. Now, if vindictive juſtice may be glorious in an human government, there is no reaſon to be drawn from the nature and fitneſs of things why it ſhould not be the ſame in the divine.

But the idea that our opponents love principally to dwell upon, is that of a *father*. Hence the charge that "We repreſent God in ſuch a light "that no earthly parent could imitate him, with-"out ſuſtaining a character ſhocking to mankind." This objection, I may obſerve in the firſt place, comes with an ill grace from Dr. Prieſtley, who teaches that "God is the author of ſin, and may "do evil, provided it be with a view that good "may come." On Neceſſity, p. 117—121. Is not this repreſenting God in ſuch a light, that no one could imitate him without ſuſtaining a character ſhocking to mankind? Whether Dr. Prieſtley's notions on this ſubject be true, or not, it is true that God's ways are ſo much above our's, that it is unjuſt in many caſes to meaſure his conduct to a rebellious world, by that of a father to his children.

In this matter, however, God is imitable. We have ſeen already that a good magiſtrate, who may juſtly be called the *father* of his people, ought not to be ſo much under the influence of blind affection, as in any caſe to ſhew mercy at the expence of the publick good. Nor is this all. There are

caſes

caſes in which a parent has been obliged in benevolence to his family, and from a concern for the general good, to give up a ſtubborn and rebellious ſon, to bring him forth with his own hands to the elders of his city, and there with his own lips bear witneſs againſt him; ſuch witneſs too, that would ſubject him, not to a mere ſalutary correction, but to be ſtoned to death by the men of his city! We know ſuch a law was made in Iſrael; (Deut. 21. 18—21.) and as a late writer obſerved upon it, Such a law "was wiſe, and good;"* it was calculated to enforce in parents an early and careful education of their children; and if, in any inſtance, it was ever executed, it was *that all Iſrael might hear and fear!* And how do we know but that it may be conſiſtent with the good of the whole ſyſtem, yea neceſſary to it, that ſome of the rebellious ſons of men, ſhould, in company with apoſtate angels, be made *examples* of divine vengeance; that they ſhould ſtand, like Lot's wife, as *pillars of ſalt*, or as everlaſting monuments of God's diſpleaſure againſt ſin; and that while their ſmoke ſhall riſe up for ever and ever, all the intelligent univerſe ſhall *hear and fear, and do no more ſo wickedly!* Indeed we muſt not only know that this *may* be the caſe, but if we pay any regard to the authority of ſcripture, that it *is* ſo. If words have any mean-

* Mr. Robinſon, in his Sermon to the young people at Willingham.

ing, this is the idea given us of the *Angels who kept not their firſt eſtate, and of the inhabitants of of Sodom and Gomorrha; who are ſaid to be ſet forth* FOR AN EXAMPLE, *ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire.* Jude 6. 7.

It belongs to the character of an all-perfect Being, who is the moral governor of the univerſe, to promote the good of the whole; but there may be caſes, as in human governments, wherein the general good may be inconſiſtent with the happineſs of ſome particular parts. The caſe of robbers, of murderers, or of traitors, whoſe lives are ſacrificed for the good of ſociety, that the example of terror afforded by their death, may counteract the example of immorality exhibited by their life, is no detraction from the benevolence of a government, but rather eſſential to it.

But how, after all, can we *love* ſuch a tremendous Being? I anſwer, a capacity and inclination to reſent an injury is never conſidered as a blemiſh even in a *private character*; but rather, if regulated by equity, as a beauty. We do not eſteem the favour of a man if we conſider him as incapable, on any occaſion, of reſentment. We ſhould call him an eaſy ſoul, who is kind merely becauſe he has not ſenſe enough to feel an inſult. But ſhall we allow it right and fit for a puny mortal thus far to know his own worth, and aſſert it; and at the

ſame

ſame time deny it to the great Supreme, and plead for his being inſulted with impunity?

But, farther; God, in the puniſhment of ſin, is not to be conſidered as acting in a merely *private capacity*, but as the univerſal moral governor; not as ſeparate from the great ſyſtem of being, but as connected with it, or as head, and guardian of it. Now in this relation vindictive juſtice is not only conſiſtent with the lovelineſs of his character, but eſſential to it. Capacity and inclination to puniſh a diſorder in a ſtate, are never thought to render an earthly prince leſs lovely in the eyes of his loyal and faithful ſubjects, but the more ſo. That temper of mind, on the contrary, which ſhould induce him to connive at diſorder, however it might go by the name of benevolence and mercy, would be accounted by all the friends of good government, injuſtice to the publick; and thoſe who in ſuch caſes ſide with the diſaffected, and plead their cauſe, are generally ſuppoſed to be tainted with diſaffection themſelves.

A Third objection is taken from the conſideration of *the glory of God*, rather than the happineſs of creatures, being his laſt end in creation. "Thoſe who aſſume to themſelves the diſtinguiſh-"ing title of orthodox, ſays Dr. Prieſtley, conſi-"der the ſupreme Being as having created all things "*for his own glory*, and by no means for the ge-

" neral happineſs of all his creatures." Diff. of Opin. § III. If by the general happineſs of *all* his creatures, Dr. Prieſtley mean, the general good of the univerſe, nothing can be more unfair than this repreſentation. Thoſe who are called orthodox never conſider the glory of God as being at variance with the happineſs of creation in general, nor with that of any part of it, except thoſe who have revolted from the divine government; nor, if we regard the intervention of a mediator, with their's, unleſs they prove finally impenitent, or as Dr. Prieſtley calls them, " wilful and obſtinate tranſgreſſors." The glory of God *conſiſts*, with reference to the preſent caſe, in doing that which is beſt upon the whole.—But if, by the general happineſs of *all* his creatures, he mean to include the happineſs of thoſe angels who kept not their firſt eſtate, and of thoſe men who die impenitent; it is acknowleged, that what is called the orthodox ſyſtem does by no means conſider this as an end in creation, either ſupreme or ſubordinate. To ſuppoſe that the happineſs of *all* the creatures, whatever might be their future conduct, was God's ultimate end in creation, (unleſs we could imagine him to be diſappointed with reſpect to the grand end he had in view) is to ſuppoſe what is contrary to *fact*. All creatures, we are certain, are not happy in this world; and if any regard is to be paid to revelation, all will not be happy in the next.

If

If it be alleged, that a portion of miſery is neceſſary in order to reliſh happineſs; that therefore the miſeries of the preſent life, upon the whole, are bleſſings; and that the miſeries threatened in the life to come may be of the ſame nature, deſigned as a purgation, by means of which, ſinners will at length eſcape the ſecond death—It is replied, All the miſeries of this world are not repreſented as bleſſings to the parties, nor even all the good things of it. The drowning of Pharaoh, for inſtance, is never ſpoken of as a bleſſing to him, and God declared that he had *curſed the bleſſings* of the wicked Prieſts, in the days of the prophet Malachi. *All things* indeed, we are aſſured, *ſhall work together for good*; but this is confined *to thoſe who love God, and are called according to his purpoſe.* As to the life to come, if the miſeries belonging to that ſtate be merely temporary and purgative, there muſt be all along a mixture of love and mercy in them; whereas the language of ſcripture is, *He that hath ſhewed no mercy, ſhall have judgment* WITHOUT MERCY. *The wine of the wrath of God will be poured out* WITHOUT MIXTURE. Nay, ſuch miſeries muſt not only contain a *mixture* of love and mercy, but they themſelves muſt be the effects and expreſſions of love; and then it will follow, that bleſſings and curſes are the ſame things. Dr. Prieſtley himſelf ſpeaks of "The laws of God as being "guarded with awful ſanctions;" and ſays, that "God will inflexibly puniſh all wilful and obſti-

"nate

"nate tranſgreſſors." Diff. of Opin. § III. But how can that be called an *awful* ſanction that only ſubjects a man to ſuch miſery as is neceſſary for his good? how, at leaſt, can that be accounted *inflexible* puniſhment in which the divine Being all along aims at the ſinner's happineſs? We might as well call the operations of a ſurgeon in amputating a mortified limb, in order to ſave the patient's life, by the name of inflexible puniſhment, as thoſe miſeries which are intended for the good of the ſinner. If that be their end, they are ſtrictly ſpeaking, bleſſings, though bleſſings in diſguiſe; and in that caſe, as Dr. Edwards in his anſwer to Dr. Chauncy has fully proved, bleſſings and curſes are in effect the ſelf ſame things.

As to our conſidering the ſupreme Being as having created all things for his own glory, I hope it will be allowed that the ſcriptures *ſeem*, at leaſt, to countenance ſuch an idea. They teach us that *God made all things* FOR HIMSELF.—that *all things are created by him, and* FOR HIM. He is expreſsly ſaid to have created Iſrael (and if Iſrael why not others?) FOR HIS GLORY. Not only *of him, and through him, but* TO HIM *are all things*. Glory and honour, and power are aſcribed to him, by the *elders and the living creatures*; for, ſay they, *Thou haſt created all things, and for* THY PLEASURE *they are and were created.**

* Prov. xvi. 4. Col. i. 16. Heb. ii. 10. Iſai. xliii. 7. Rom. xi. 36. Rev. iv. 11.

But

But farther, and what is more immediately to the point, I hope this ſentiment will not be alleged as a proof of our want of *love to God*; for it is only aſſigning him the ſupreme place in the ſyſtem of Being; and Dr. Prieſtley himſelf elſewhere ſpeaks of "The love of God, and a regard to his glory," as the ſame thing. Diff. of Opin. § I. One ſhould think thoſe on the other hand, who aſſign the happineſs of creatures as God's ultimate end, thereby giving him only a ſubordinate place in the ſyſtem, could not allege this as an evidence of their love to him. That place which God holds in the great ſyſtem of Being he ought to hold in our affections; for we are not required to love him in a greater proportion than the place which he occupies requires. If it were otherwiſe our affections muſt move in a prepoſterous direction. We ought therefore, on this ſuppoſition, to love ourſelves; our own happineſs, and the happineſs of our fellow-creatures *more* than God; for God himſelf is ſuppoſed to do the ſame. But, if ſo, the great rule of human action ſhould have been different. Inſtead of requiring love to God in the *firſt* place, with all our heart, ſoul, mind, and ſtrength; and *then* love to ourſelves, and our neighbours; it ſhould have been reverſed. The ſong of the angels too, inſtead of beginning with *Glory to God in the higheſt*; and ending with, *peace on earth, and good will to men*; ſhould have placed the laſt firſt, and the firſt laſt. How ſuch a view of things

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can tend to promote *the love of God*, unleſs his having the ſubordinate place in our affections be greater than if he had the ſupreme, is difficult to conceive.

The Great God who fills heaven and earth muſt needs be allowed to form the far greateſt proportion, if I may ſo ſpeak, of the whole ſyſtem of Being; for, compared with him, *All nations*, yea all worlds, *are but as a drop of a bucket, or as the ſmall duſt of the balance.* He is the ſource, and continual ſupport of exiſtence in all it's varied forms. As the great Guardian of Being in general, therefore, it is fit and right, that he ſhould in the firſt place guard the glory of his own character and government. Nor can this be to the diſadvantage of the univerſe, but the contrary; as will appear if it be conſidered, that it is the Glory of God to do that which ſhall be beſt upon the whole. The Glory of God therefore connects with it the general good of the created ſyſtem, and of all it's parts, except thoſe whoſe welfare claſhes with the welfare of the whole.

If it were otherwiſe, if the happineſs of *all* creatures were the great end that God from the beginning had in view, then doubtleſs in order that this end may be accompliſhed, every thing elſe muſt, as occaſion requires, give way to it. The glory of his own character, occupying only a ſubordinate place

place in the ſyſtem, if ever it ſhould ſtand in the way of that which is ſupreme, muſt give place amongſt other things. And if God have conſented to all this, it muſt be becauſe the happineſs of creatures is an object of the greateſt magnitude, and moſt fit to be choſen—that is, it is better, and more worthy of God, as the governor of the univerſe, to give up his character for purity, equity, wiſdom, and veracity, and become vile and contemptible in the eyes of all his creatures; it is better that the bands which bind all holy intelligences to him ſhould be broken, and the cords which hold together the whole moral ſyſtem be caſt away, than that the happineſs of the creature ſhould in any inſtance be given up! Judge, ye friends of God, does this conſiſt with "the moſt perfect veneration "for the divine character"?

Once more, It ſeems to be generally ſuppoſed by our opponents, that *the worſhip we pay to Chriſt* tends to divide our hearts, and that in proportion as we adore him, we detract from the eſſential glory of the Father. In this view, therefore, they reckon themſelves to exerciſe a greater veneration for God than we. But it is worthy of notice, and particularly the ſerious notice of our opponents, that it is no new thing for an oppoſition to Chriſt to be carried on under the plea of *love to God*. This was the very plea of the Jews when they took up ſtones to ſtone him. *For a good work*, ſaid they, *we ſtone*

thee not, but for that thou being a man, makeſt thy-ſelf GOD. They very much prided themſelves in their GOD; and under the influence of that ſpirit conſtantly rejected the Lord Jeſus. *Thou art called a Jew*, ſaid Paul, *and makeſt thy boaſt of* GOD. *We be not born of fornication*, ſaid they, *we have one father, even* GOD. *Give* GOD *the praiſe, we know that this man is a ſinner.* It was under the pretext of zeal and friendſhip for GOD, that they at laſt put him to death as a *blaſphemer.* But what kind of a zeal was this; and in what manner did Jeſus treat it? *If* GOD *were your father*, ſaid he, *ye would love me. He that is of* GOD *heareth* GOD'S *words. It is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye ſay that he is your* GOD; *yet ye have not known him. I know you, that you have not the love of* GOD *in you.**

Again, The primitive chriſtians will be allowed to have loved God in a proper manner; yet they worſhipped Jeſus Chriſt. Not only did the martyr Stephen cloſe his life by committing his departing ſpirit into the hands of Jeſus, but it was the common practice in primitive times to invoke his name. He hath authority, ſaid Ananias concerning Saul, to bind all *that call on thy name.* One part of the chriſtian miſſion was to declare, That

* Rom. ii. 17. John x. 33. viii. 41—ix. 24.—viii. 42, 47, 54, 55—v. 42.

whoſoever

whoſoever ſhould *call on the name of the Lord* ſhould be ſaved—even that Lord of whom the Gentiles had not heard. Paul addreſſed himſelf to *All that in every place called upon the name of Jeſus Chriſt.* Theſe modes of expreſſion (which, if I am not greatly miſtaken, always ſignify divine worſhip) plainly inform us, that it was not merely the practice of a few individuals, but of the great body of the primitive chriſtians, to invoke the name of Chriſt; nay, and that this was a mark by which they were diſtinguiſhed, *as chriſtians.* Acts ix. 14. compared with Ver. 17. Rom. x. 11—14. 1 Cor. i. 2.

Farther, It ought to be conſidered, that in worſhipping the Son of God, we worſhip him, not on account of that wherein he differs from the Father; but on account of thoſe perfections which we believe him to poſſeſs in common with him. This, with the conſideration that we worſhip him not to the excluſion of the Father, any more than the Father to the excluſion of him, but rather as *one with him,* removes all apprehenſions from our minds that in aſcribing glory to the one, we detract from that of the other. Nor can we think, but that theſe ideas are confirmed, and the weight of the objection removed, by thoſe declarations of ſcripture where the Father and the Son are repreſented as being in ſuch union, that *he that had ſeen the one, had ſeen the other,* and *he that honoured the one*

honoured the other; yea, that *he who honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father who hath ſent him.**

It might fairly be argued in favour of Calviniſtic doctrines, tending to promote the love of God, that upon thoſe principles we have *more to love him for* than upon the other. On this ſyſtem we have *much* to be forgiven, and therefore love much. The *expence* at which we believe our ſalvation to have been obtained furniſhes us with a motive of love to which nothing can be compared. But this I ſhall refer to another place†; and conclude with only reminding you, that notwithſtanding Dr. Prieſtley loads Calviniſtic principles with ſuch heavy charges as thoſe mentioned at the beginning of this Letter, yet he elſewhere acknowleges them to be "Generally favourable to that leading virtue, "devotion.

I am, &c.

* John xiv. 7—9.—v. 23. † Letter XIV.

LETTER VIII.

On Candor and Benevolence to men.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

YOU recollect that the Calviniſtic ſyſtem ſtands charged by Dr. Prieſtley not only with being inconſiſtent with a perfect veneration of the divine character, but with "perfect candor and benevo-"lence to man."

This, it muſt be owned, has often been objected to the Calviniſts. Their views of things have been ſuppoſed to render them ſour, and ill-natured towards thoſe who differ from them. Charity, candor, benevolence, liberality, and the like, are virtues to which Socinians, on the other hand, lay almoſt an excluſive claim. And ſuch a weight do they aſcribe to theſe virtues in the ſcale of morality, that they conceive themſelves, "upon the whole, "even allowing that they have more of an appa-"rent conformity to the world than the Trinitari-"ans, to approach nearer to the proper temper of "Chriſtianity than they." Dr. Prieſtley's Vol. Serm. p. 100.

I ſhall not go about to vindicate Calviniſts any farther than I conceive their ſpirit and conduct to admit

admit of a fair vindication; but I am very well ſatisfied that if things are cloſely examined, it will be found that a great deal of what our opponents attribute to themſelves is not benevolence, or candor; and that a great deal of what they attribute to us, is not owing to the want of either.

With reſpect to *benevolence*, or *good-will to men*, the reality of this virtue depends upon it's being connected with love to God. There is ſuch a thing as *partiality* to men, with reſpect to the points in which they and their Maker are at variance; but this is not benevolence. Partiality to a criminal at the bar might induce us to pity him ſo far as to plead in extenuation of his guilt, and to endeavour to bring him off from the juſt puniſhment of the laws; but this would not be benevolence. There muſt be a *rectitude* in our actions and affections to render them truly virtuous. Regard to the publick good muſt keep pace with compaſſion to the miſerable; elſe the latter will degenerate into vice, and lead us to be *partakers of other men's ſins*. Whatever pretences are made to devotion, or love to God, we never admit it to be real, unleſs it be accompanied with love to men; neither ought any pretences of love to men to be admitted as genuine, unleſs they are accompanied with love to God. Each of theſe virtues is conſidered in the ſcriptures as an evidence of the other. *If a man ſay, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar. By this*

we

we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 1 John iv. 20. & v. 2.

There is ſuch a thing as *partiality* to men, as obſerved before, with reſpect to the points, in which they and their Maker are at variance; a leaning to thoſe notions that repreſent their ſin as comparatively little; and their repentance and obedience as a balance againſt it; that ſpeaks ſmooth things, and gives hope that without an atonement, nay, even without repentance in this life, all will be well at laſt. But if it ſhould prove, not only that God is wholly in the right, but man wholly in the wrong; that ſin is exceeding ſinful; that we all deſerve to be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord; and that, if we be not intereſted in the atonement of Chriſt, this puniſhment muſt actually take place;—if theſe things, I ſay, ſhould at laſt prove true, then all ſuch notions as have flattered the pride of men, and cheriſhed their preſumption, inſtead of being honoured with the epithets of liberal and benevolent, will be called by very different names. The princes and people of Judah would doubtleſs be apt to think the ſentiments taught by *Hananiah*, who propheſied ſmooth things concerning them, much more benevolent and liberal than thoſe of *Jeremiah*, who generally came with heavy tidings; yet true benevolence exiſted not in the former, but in the latter.

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Jer. xxviii. Indeed, there is in the complexion of the whole ſyſtem of our opponents ſuch a reſemblance to that of the falſe prophets, who *propheſied ſmooth things, and healed the hurt of the daughter of Iſrael ſlightly, crying peace, peace, when there was no peace*; and the general caſt of their objections to our views of things are ſo near akin to what might have been objected to the true prophets, that, in the eſteem of all who wiſh to know the truth, how ungrateful ſo ever it may be to fleſh and blood, it muſt needs afford a ſtrong preſumption againſt them.

A great deal of what is called *candor* and *benevolence* amongſt Socinians, is nothing elſe but *indifference to all religious principle.* "If we could be "ſo happy, ſays Dr. Prieſtley, as to believe that there "are no errors, but what men may be ſo circum-"ſtanced as to be *innocently* betrayed into; that "any miſtake of the head is very conſiſtent with "rectitude of heart; and that all differences in "modes of worſhip may be only the different me-"thods by which different men (who are equally "*the offspring of God*) are endeavouring to honour "and obey their common parent; our own dif-"ferences of opinion would have no tendency to "leſſen our mutual love and eſteem." Diff. of Opin. § II. But this is manifeſtly no other than indifference to all religious principle. This, it is allowed, would produce a temper of mind which

Dr.

Dr. Prieſtley calls candor and benevolence, but which in fact is neither one nor the other. Benevolence is *good will to men*, but good will to men is very diſtinct from a good opinion of their principles, or their practices; ſo diſtinct, that the former may exiſt in all it's force, without the leaſt degree of the latter. Our Lord thought very ill of the principles and practices of the people of Jeruſalem; yet he *beheld the city, and wept over it*. This was genuine benevolence.

Benevolence is a very diſtinct thing from *complacency*, or *eſteem*. Theſe are founded on an approbation of character; but the other is not. I am bound by the law of love to bear good will to men, as creatures of God, and as fellow-creatures, ſo as by every mean in my power to promote their welfare, both as to this life, and that which is to come; and all this, let their character be what it may. I am alſo bound to *eſteem* every perſon for that in him which is truly amiable, be it in a friend, or in an enemy; and to put the beſt conſtruction upon his actions that truth will admit; but no law obliges me to eſteem a perſon reſpecting thoſe things which I have reaſon to conſider as erroneous or vicious. I may pity him, and ought to do ſo; but to eſteem him in thoſe reſpects would be contrary to the love of both God and man. Indifference to religious principle, it is acknowleged, will promote eſteem. We ſhall form a good

opinion of various characters, which otherwiſe we ſhould not do; but then the queſtion is, Would that eſteem be right, or amiable? On the contrary, if religious principle of any kind ſhould be found neceſſary to ſalvation; and if benevolence conſiſt in that good will to men, which leads us to promote their real welfare, it muſt contradict it; for the welfare of men is promoted by thinking and ſpeaking the truth concerning them. I might ſay, If we could be ſo happy as to think virtue and vice indifferent things, we ſhould then poſſeſs a far greater degree of eſteem for ſome men than we do now; but would ſuch a kind of eſteem be right, or of any uſe to either ourſelves or them?

Candor, as it relates to the treatment of an adverſary, is that temper of mind which will induce us to treat him openly, fairly, and ingenuouſly; granting him every thing that can be granted conſiſtent with truth, and entertaining the moſt favourable opinion of his character and conduct that Juſtice will admit. But what has all this to do with indifference to religious principle, as to matters of ſalvation? Is there no ſuch thing as treating a perſon with fairneſs, openneſs, and generoſity, while we entertain a very ill opinion of his principles, and have the moſt painful apprehenſions as to the danger of his ſtate? Where was there ever a more candid writer of controverſy than the late Preſident Edwards? yet Preſident Edwards

conſidered

conſidered many of the ſentiments againſt which he wrote, as deſtructive to the ſouls of men, and thoſe who held them as being in a dangerous ſituation.

As a great deal of what is called candor and benevolence among Socinians is merely the effect of indifference to religious principle, as to matters of ſalvation; ſo a great deal of that in Calviniſts, for which they are accuſed of the want of theſe virtues, is no other than *ſerious attachment to what they account divine truth, and a ſerious diſapprobation of ſentiments which they deem ſubverſive of it.* And ſurely neither of theſe things is inconſiſtent with either candor or benevolence; if they be, however, Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles are involved in the guilt equally with the Calviniſts. They cultivated ſuch an attachment to religious principle, as to be in real earneſt in the promotion of it, and conſtantly repreſented the knowlege and belief of it as neceſſary to eternal life. *Ye ſhall know the truth,* ſaid Chriſt, *and the truth ſhall make you free. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlaſting life; and he that believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.** They alſo conſtantly diſcovered a marked diſapprobation of thoſe ſentiments which tended to introduce *another goſpel,* ſo

* John viii. 32—xvii. 3.—iii. 36.

far as to declare that man accurſed that ſhould propagate them. They conſidered falſe principles as pernicious and deſtructive to the ſouls of men. *If ye believe not that I am he,* ſaid Chriſt to the Jews, *ye ſhall die in your ſins—and whither I go ye cannot come.* To the Galatians, who did not fully reject chriſtianity, but in the matter of juſtification were for uniting the works of the law with the grace of the goſpel, Paul teſtified, ſaying, *If ye be circumciſed, Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing.**

Had the apoſtle Paul conſidered "All the dif-"ferent modes of worſhip as what might be only "the different methods of different men, endea-"vouring to honour and obey their common pa-"rent;" he would not have felt *his ſpirit ſtirred in him* when he ſaw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry: at leaſt, he would not have addreſſed idolaters in ſuch ſtrong language as he did, *preaching to them that they ſhould turn from theſe vanities unto the living God.* Paul conſidered them as having been all their life employed, not in worſhipping the living God, only in a different mode, but *mere vanities.* Nor did he conſider it as a "mere miſ-"take of the head, into which they might have "been innocently betrayed;" but as a *ſin,* for which they were *without excuſe*; a *ſin,* for which he called upon them in the name of the living God to *repent.*†

* Gal. i. 8. John viii. 21—24. Gal. v. 2, 3, 4. † Acts xvii. 16.—xiv. 15. Rom. i. 20. Acts xvii. 30.

Now

Now if candor and benevolence be chriſtian virtues, which they doubtleſs are; one ſhould think they muſt conſiſt with the practice of Chriſt and his apoſtles. But if this be allowed, the main ground on which Calviniſts are cenſured will be removed; and the candor for which their opponents plead muſt appear to be ſpurious, and foreign to the genuine ſpirit of chriſtianity.

Candor and benevolence as chriſtian virtues muſt alſo conſiſt with each other; but the candor of Socinians is deſtructive of benevolence as it is exemplified in the ſcriptures. Benevolence, in Chriſt and his apoſtles, extended not merely, nor mainly, to the bodies of men, but to their ſouls; nor did they think ſo favourably of mankind as to deſiſt from alarming and warning them, but the reverſe. They viewed the whole world as *lying in wickedneſs*, in a periſhing condition, and hazarded their earthly all to reſcue them from it, as from the jaws of deſtruction. But it is eaſy to perceive that in proportion to the prevalence of Socinian candor we are taught to conſider mankind, even the heathens, as a race of virtuous beings, all worſhipping the great Father of creation, only in different modes; hence our concern for their ſalvation will abate, and we ſhall become ſo indifferent as never to take any conſiderable pains for their converſion. Indeed this is the very truth with reſpect to Socinians. They diſcover, in general, no manner of concern

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for the ſalvation of either heathens abroad, or profligates at home. Their candor ſupplies the place of this kind of benevolence, and not unfrequently excites a ſcornful ſmile upon the conduct of thoſe who exerciſe it.

The difference between our circumſtances and thoſe of Chriſt and his apoſtles, who were divinely inſpired, however it ought to deter us from paſſing judgment upon the hearts of individuals, as they ſometimes did, ought not to make us think that any mode of worſhip may be equally ſafe, or that religious principle is indifferent as to the affairs of ſalvation; for this would be to conſider as falſe, what by divine inſpiration they taught as true.

Let us come to matters of fact. Mr. Belſham does not deny that Calviniſts may be "pious, can-"did, and benevolent;" but then he thinks they would have been *more ſo* if they had been Socinians. "They, and there are many ſuch, ſays he, "who are ſincerely pious, and diffuſively benevo-"lent *with* theſe principles, could not have failed "to have been much *better*, and much happier, "had they adopted a milder, a more rational, a "more truly evangelical creed." Serm. p. 30 Now if this be indeed the caſe, one might expect that the moſt perfect examples of theſe virtues are not to be looked for amongſt us, but amongſt our

opponents; and yet it may be queſtioned whether they will pretend to more perfect examples of piety, candor, or benevolence than are to be found in the characters of a HALE, a FRANCK, a BRAINERD, an EDWARDS, a WHITFIELD, a THORNTON, and a HOWARD, (to ſay nothing of the living) whoſe lives were ſpent in doing good to the ſouls and bodies of men; and who lived and died depending on the atoning blood, and juſtifying righteouſneſs of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. The laſt of theſe great men, in whom his country glories, and who is juſtly conſidered as *the martyr of humanity*, is ſaid thus to have expreſſed himſelf at the cloſe of his laſt Will and Teſtament, "My immortal ſpirit I caſt "on the ſovereign mercy of God, through Jeſus "Chriſt, who is the Lord of my ſtrength, and I "truſt is become my ſalvation." He is ſaid alſo to have given orders for a plain, neat ſtone to be placed upon his grave, with this inſcription, *Spes mea Chriſtus*; CHRIST IS MY HOPE!

We are often reminded of the perſecuting ſpirit of Trinitarians, and particularly of *Calvin* towards *Servetus*. This example has been long held up by our opponents, not only as a proof of his cruel diſpoſition, and odious character; but as if it were ſufficient to determine, what muſt be the turn and ſpirit of Calviniſts in general. But ſuppoſing the caſe alluded to were allowed to prove the cruelty of Calvin's diſpoſition; nay, that he was upon the whole

whole a wicked man, and as deſtitute of religion as of humanity; what would all this prove as to the tendency of the ſyſtem that happened to be called after his name, but which is allowed to have exiſted long before he was born? We regard what no man did or taught as oracular, unleſs he could prove himſelf divinely inſpired, to which Calvin never pretended. Far be it from us to vindicate Calvin, or any other man, in the buſineſs of perſecution. We abhor every thing of the kind as much as our opponents. Though the principles for which he contended appear to us, in the main, to be juſt; yet the weapons of his warfare, in this inſtance, were carnal.

It ought however to be acknowleged on the other ſide, and if our opponents poſſeſſed as much candor as they pretend to, they would in this, as well as in other caſes, acknowlege, that perſecution for religious principles was not at that time peculiar to any party of chriſtians, but common to all, whenever they were inveſted with civil power. It was an error; but it was the error of the age. They looked upon hereſy in the ſame light as we now look upon thoſe crimes which are inimical to the peace of civil ſociety, and accordingly proceeded to puniſh them with the ſword of the civil magiſtrate. If Socinians did not perſecute their adverſaries ſo much as Trinitarians, it was becauſe they were not equally inveſted with the power of doing ſo.

Mr. Lindſey

Mr. Lindſey acknowleges that *Fauſtus Socinus* himſelf was not free from perſecution in the caſe of *Francis Davides*, ſuperintendent of the Unitarian churches in Tranſylvania; *Davides* had diſputed with *Socinus* on the invocation of Chriſt, and "died in priſon in conſequence of his opinion, "and ſome offence taken at his ſuppoſed in- "diſcreet propagation of it from the pulpit. I "wiſh I could ſay, adds Mr. Lindſey, that *Soci-* "*nus*, or his friend *Blandrata*, had done all in "their power to prevent his commitment, or pro- cure his releaſe afterwards." The difference between *Socinus* and *Davides* was very ſlight. They both held Chriſt to be a mere man; only the former was for praying to him notwithſtanding, which the latter with much greater conſiſtency diſapproved. Conſidering this, the perſecution to which *Socinus* was acceſſary was as great as that of *Calvin*; and there is no reaſon to think, but if *Davides* had differed as much from *Socinus*, as *Servetus* did from *Calvin*; and if the civil magiſtrates had been for burning him, *Socinus* would have concurred with it. To this it might be added, that the conduct of *Socinus* was marked with *diſingenuity*, in that he conſidered the opinion of *Davides* in no very heinous point of light; only he was afraid of increaſing the odium, under which he and his party already lay, amongſt other chriſtian churches. Lindſey's Apol. p. 153—156.

Mr. Robinſon, in his *Eccleſiaſtical Reſearches* has given an account of both theſe perſecutions; but it is eaſy to perceive the prejudice under which he wrote. His heart evidently leans to an extenuation on behalf of Socinus, while he draws in every poſſible circumſtance that can in any manner blacken the memory of Calvin. Whatever regard we may bear to the latter, I am perſuaded we ſhould not wiſh to extenuate his conduct in the perſecution of *Servetus*, or repreſent it in ſofter terms, nor yet ſo ſoft, as Mr. Robinſon has repreſented that of the former in the perſecution of *Davides*.

We do not accuſe Socinianiſm of being a perſecuting ſyſtem on account of this inſtance of miſconduct in *Socinus*; and it is no proof of the ſuperior candor of our opponents that they are continually acting the very reverſe towards us. As a *baptiſt*, I might indulge reſentment againſt *Cranmer*, who cauſed ſome of that denomination to be burned alive; yet I am inclined to think, from all that I have read of *Cranmer*, that, notwithſtanding his conduct in theſe inſtances, he was upon the whole of an amiable diſpoſition. And though he held with pædobaptiſm, and in this manner defended it, yet I ſhould never think of imputing a ſpirit of perſecution to pædobaptiſts in general, or charging their ſentiment in that particular with being of a perſecuting tendency. It was the opinion that *erroneous religious principles are puniſhable by the civil*

vil magiſtrate, that did the miſchief, whether at Geneva, in Tranſylvania, or in Britain; and to this, rather than to Trinitarianiſm, or to Unitarianiſm, it ought to be imputed.

We need not hold, with Mr. Lindſey, "The innocence of error," in order to ſhun a ſpirit of perſecution. Though we conceive of error, in many caſes, as criminal in the ſight of God, and as requiring admonition, yea excluſion from a *religious* ſociety; yet while we reject all ideas of it's expoſing a perſon to *civil* puniſhment, or inconvenience, we ought to be acquitted of the charge of perſecution. Where the majority of a religious ſociety conſider the avowed principles of an individual of that ſociety as being fundamentally erroneous, and inconſiſtent with the united worſhip and well-being of the whole; it cannot be perſecution to endeavour by ſcriptural arguments to convince him, and if that cannot be accompliſhed, to exclude him from their communion. Such a practice agrees, not only with that of the primitive churches, but with that of ſociety in general. No ſociety ever yet exiſted, or can exiſt, without the right of excluding thoſe members, whoſe notions run counter to the grand principles on which it is formed.

There are, it is acknowleged, many inſtances of a want of candor and benevolence amongſt us;

over which it becomes us to lament. This is the caſe eſpecially amongſt thoſe who have imbibed a ſet of principles without examination, and ſeem determined to abide by them, right or wrong. The zeal of ſuch people in ſupport of a ſyſtem, (which is generally proportioned to their ignorance of it, and of the true grounds on which it reſts) will carry them into almoſt any meaſures to gain a point.—I may add, there has been, in my opinion, a great deal too much haughtineſs and uncandidneſs diſcovered by ſome of the Trinitarians of the *eſtabliſhed church*, in their controverſies with Socinian diſſenters; theſe diſpoſitions however do not belong to them as Trinitarians, but as Church-men. A ſlight obſervation of human nature will convince us, that the adherents to a religion eſtabliſhed by law, let their ſentiments be what they may, will always be under a powerful temptation to take it for granted that they are right, and that all who diſſent from them are contemptible ſectaries, unworthy of a candid and reſpectful treatment.

Indeed there is a mixture of evil paſſions in all our religious affections, againſt which it becomes us to watch and pray. I can ſee many things in thoſe of my own ſentiments which I cannot approve; and poſſibly others may ſee the ſame in me. And ſhould the Socinians pretend to the contrary with reſpect to themſelves, or aſpire at a ſuperiority to their neighbours, it may be more than they are able

able to maintain. It cannot eſcape the obſervation of thinking and impartial men, that the candor of which they ſo frequently boaſt, is pretty much confined to their own party, or thoſe that are near akin to them. Socinians can be candid to Arians, and Arians to Socinians, and each of them to Deiſts; but if Calviniſts expect to come in for a ſhare, let them not greatly wonder if they be diſappointed. There need not be a greater, or more ſtanding proof of this, than the manner in which the writings of the latter are treated in the *Monthly Review*.

It has been frequently obſerved, that though Socinian writers plead ſo much for candor and eſteem amongſt profeſſing chriſtians; yet, generally ſpeaking, there is ſuch a mixture of ſcornful contempt diſcovered towards their opponents, as renders their profeſſions far from conſiſtent. Mr. *Lindſey* very charitably accounts for the miſtakes of thoſe who embrace the doctrine of our Saviour's Divinity, by ſuppoſing that, "They are to be "conſidered and pitied, as being under a debility "of mind in this reſpect, however ſenſible and ra-"tional in others." Would Mr. Lindſey wiſh to have this conſidered as a ſpecimen of Socinian candor?—If Mrs. *Barbauld* had been poſſeſſed of candor equal to her ingenuity, inſtead of ſuppoſing that Calviniſts derive their ideas of Election, the Atonement, future puniſhment, &c. from the tyranny

ranny and caprice of an Eaſtern deſpot; ſhe might have admitted, whether they were right or not, that thoſe principles appeared to them to be taught in the Bible.*

If we may judge of the candor of Socinians from the ſpirit diſcovered by Mr. *Robinſon* in the latter part of his life, the concluſion will not be very favourable to their ſyſtem. At a time when this writer profeſſed himſelf a Calviniſt, he could acknowlege thoſe who differed from him with reſpect to the divinity of Chriſt, as "Miſtaken brethren;" but when he comes to change his ſentiments on that article, he treats thoſe from whom he differs, in a very different manner; loading them with every ſpecies of abuſe. Witneſs his treatment of *Auguſtin*, whoſe conduct, previous to his converſion to chriſtianity, though lamented with all the tokens of penitential ſorrow, and entirely forſaken in the remaining period of life, he induſtriouſly repreſents to his diſadvantage; calling him "A pre-"tended ſaint, but an illiterate hypocrite, of "wicked diſpoſitions;" loading his memory, and even the very country where he lived, with every

* A friend of mine on looking over *Mrs. Barbauld's* Pamphlet, in anſwer to Mr. Wakefield, remarks as follows: "Mrs. B. uſed to call Socinianiſm *The frigid zone of Chriſti-*"*anity*, but ſhe is now got far north herſelf. She is amaz-"ingly clever, her language enchanting; but her Caricatura "of Calviniſm is abominable."

opprobrious

opprobrious epithet that could be well deviſed. *Hiſt. of Baptiſm*, page 652. Similar inſtances might be added from his *Eccleſiaſtical Reſearches*, in which the characters of *Calvin* and *Beza* are treated in an equally uncandid manner.*

Dr. *Prieſtley* himſelf, who is ſaid to be the moſt candid man of his party, is ſeldom overloaded with this virtue, when he is dealing with Calviniſts. It does not diſcover a very great degree of perfection in this, or even in common civility, to call thoſe who conſider his principles as pernicious by the name of "bigots, the bigots" &c. which he very frequently does. Nor is it to the credit of his *im-*

* Mr. *Robinſon* in his notes on *Claude* obſerves, from Mr. *Burgh*, that "Whatever occurs in modern writers of hiſtory "of a narrative nature, we find to be an inference from a ſyſ- "tem previouſly aſſumed, without any ſeeming view to the "truth of the facts recorded; but to the eſtabliſhment of "which the hiſtorian appears, through every ſpecies of miſre- "preſentation, to have zealouſly directed his force—The ſub- "verſion of freedom was the evident purpoſe of Mr. Hume, "in writing the *Hiſtory of England*. I fear we may with too "much juſtice affirm, the ſubverſion of chriſtianity to be the "object of Mr. Gibbon in writing his *Hiſtory of the decline* "*and fall of the Roman empire.*" Vol. II. p. 147, 141. Perhaps it might with equal propriety be added, that the ſubverſion of what is commonly termed orthodoxy and the vindication, or palliation, of every thing which in every age has been called by the name of hereſy, was the object of Mr. Robinſon in writing his *Hiſtory of Baptiſm*, and what has ſince been publiſhed under the title of *Eccleſiaſtical Reſearches*.

partiality,

partiality, any more than of his candor, when weighing the moral excellence of trinitarians and unitarians againſt each other, as in a balance, to ſuppoſe "The former to have *leſs*, and the latter "ſomething *more* of a real principle of religion "than they ſeem to have." Serm. p. 100. This looks like taking a portion out of one ſcale, and caſting it into the other, for the purpoſe of making weight where it was wanting.

Dr. Prieſtley, in anſwer to Mr. *Burn* on the perſon of Chriſt, acquits him of "Any thing baſe, "diſingenuous, immoral or wicked;" and ſeeing Mr. Burn had not acquitted him of all ſuch things in return, the Doctor takes occaſion to boaſt that his "principles whatever they are, are more *candid* "than thoſe of Mr. Burn." *Fam. Letts.* Lett. XVIII. But if this acknowlegement, candid as it may ſeem, be compared with another paſſage in the ſame performance, it will appear to leſs advantage. In Letter V. the Doctor goes about to account for the *motives* of his opponents, and if the following language does not inſinuate any thing "baſe, immoral, or wicked" to have influenced Mr. Burn, it may be difficult to decide what baſeneſs, immorality, or wickedneſs is. "As to Mr. "Burn's being willing to have *a gird at me*, as "Falſtaff ſays, it may eaſily be accounted for. "He has a view to riſe in his profeſſion, and be-"ing a man of good natural underſtanding, and

good

"good elocution, but having had no advantage of "education, or family connexions, he may think "it neceſſary to do ſomething in order to make "himſelf conſpicuous; and he might ſuppoſe he "could not do better than follow the ſure ſteps of "thoſe who had ſucceeded in the ſame chaſe before "him." What can any perſon make of theſe two paſſages put together? It muſt appear *either* that Dr. Prieſtley accuſed Mr. Burn of motives of which in his conſcience he did not believe him to be guilty; *or* that he acquitted him of every thing baſe and wicked, not becauſe he thought him ſo, but merely with a view to glory over him by affecting to be under the influence of ſuperior candor and generoſity.

The manner in which Dr. Prieſtley has treated Mr. *Badcock*, in his *Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, holding him up as an immoral character, at a time when, unleſs ſome valuable end could have been anſwered by it, his memory ſhould have been at reſt, is thought to be very far from either candor or benevolence. The Doctor and Mr. Badcock ſeem to have been heretofore upon very friendly terms—not very wide aſunder as to ſentiment—private Letters paſs between them—and Mr. Badcock always acknowleges Dr. Prieſtley his ſuperior—But about 1783 Mr. Badcock oppoſes Dr. Prieſtley in the *Monthly Review*, and is thought by many to have the ad-

vantage of him. After this he is ſaid to act ſcandalouſly, and diſhoneſtly—He dies—and ſoon after his death Dr. Prieſtley avails himſelf of his former correſpondence to expoſe his diſhoneſty; and as if this were not enough, ſupplies from his own conjecture what was wanting of fact, to render him moſt compleatly odious to mankind.

Dr. Prieſtley may plead, that he has held up "The example of this unhappy man as a warning "to others. So, indeed, he ſpeaks; but thinking people will ſuppoſe that if this *Zimri* had not *ſlain his maſter, his bones might have reſted in peace.* Dr. Prieſtley had juſt cauſe for expoſing the author of *Theodoſius* in the manner he has in thoſe Letters; juſtice to himſelf required this: but what neceſſity was there for expoſing Mr. Badcock? Allowing that there was ſufficient evidence to ſupport the heavy charge, wherein does this affect the merits of the cauſe? Does proving a man a villain anſwer his arguments? Is it worthy of a generous antagoniſt to avail himſelf of ſuch methods to prejudice the publick mind? Does it belong to a controverſiſt to write his opponent's hiſtory, after he is dead, and to hold up his character in a diſadvantageous light, ſo as to depreciate his writings?

Whatever good opinion Socinian writers may entertain of the ability and integrity of ſome few individuals who differ from them, it is pretty evident

evident that they have the *candor* to conſider the body of their opponents as either *ignorant*, or *inſincere*. By the poem which Mr. Badcock wrote in praiſe of Dr. Prieſtley, at ſuch time as he was, as the Doctor informs us, his "humble admirer," we may ſee in what light Trinitarians are conſidered by their adverſaries. Thoſe of the *Clergy* are there repreſented as "ſticking faſt to the church "for the ſake of a living;" and thoſe whom the writer calls "orthodox, popular preachers," (which I ſuppoſe may principally refer to *Diſſenters*, and *Methodiſts*) are deſcribed as *Fools* and *enthuſiaſts*; as either "ſtaring, ſtamping, and damning in non-"ſenſe;" or elſe "whining out the tidings of ſal-"vation, telling their auditors that grace is cheap, "and works are all an empty bubble." All this is publiſhed by Dr. Prieſtley, in his XXII *Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, and that without any marks of diſapprobation. Dr. Prieſtley himſelf, though he does not deſcend to ſo low and ſcurrilous a manner of writing as the above, yet ſuggeſts the ſame thing, in the dedication of his *Illuſtrations of Philoſophical Neceſſity*. He there praiſes Dr. *Jebb* for his "attachment to the una-"dulterated principles of chriſtianity, how unpo-"pular ſoever they may have become, through the "prejudices of the *weak*, or the *intereſted* part of "mankind."

After all, it is allowed that Dr. Prieſtley is in

general, and eſpecially when he has not a Calviniſt to deal with, a fair and candid opponent; much more ſo than the *Monthly Reviewers*, who, with the late Mr. Badcock, ſeem to rank amongſt his "humble admirers*." Candid, and open, however as Dr. Prieſtley in general is, the above are certainly no very trifling exceptions; and conſidering him as one of the moſt candid writers of the whole party, they are ſufficient to prove the point for which they are alleged; namely, that when Socinians profeſs to be more candid than their opponents, their profeſſion includes more than their conduct will juſtify.

I am, &c.

* About eight or nine years ago the *Monthly Review* was at open War with Dr. Prieſtley, and the Doctor like an incenſed Monarch, ſummoned all his mighty reſources to expoſe it's weakneſs, and degrade it in the eye of the publick. The conductors of the Review, at length, finding it ſeems that *their country was nouriſhed by the King's country, deſired peace.* They have ever ſince very punctually paid him *tribute*; and the conqueror ſeems very well contented on this condition, to grant them his favour, patronage, and protection.

LETTER IX.

The Syſtems compared as to their tendency to promote Humility.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

YOU recollect the prophecy of Iſaiah, in which, ſpeaking of goſpel times, he predicts that *The loftineſs of man ſhall be bowed down, and the haughtineſs of men ſhall be made low, and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted in that day*; as if it were one peculiar characteriſtic of the true goſpel to lay low the pride of man. The whole tenor of the New Teſtament enforces the ſame idea. *Ye ſee your calling, brethren, how that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath choſen the fooliſh things of the world, to confound the wiſe; and God hath choſen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and baſe things of the world, and things which are deſpiſed hath God choſen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence. Jeſus ſaid, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes. Where is boaſting? It is excluded.*

*By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith**. It may ſafely be concluded from theſe paſſages, and various others of the ſame meaning, that the ſyſtem which has the greateſt tendency to promote this virtue, approaches neareſt to the true goſpel of Chriſt.

Pride, the oppoſite of humility, may be diſtinguiſhed, by it's objects, into natural and ſpiritual. Both conſiſt in a too high eſteem of ourſelves; the one on account of thoſe accompliſhments which are merely natural, or which pertain to us as men, the other on account of thoſe which are ſpiritual, or which pertain to us as good men. With reſpect to the firſt, it is not very difficult to know who they are who aſcribe moſt to their own underſtandings; who profeſs to believe in nothing but what they can comprehend; who arrogate to themſelves the name of *rational chriſtians*, and affect to "pity all thoſe who maintain the divinity of Chriſt, "as being under a debility of mind in this reſpect, "however ſenſible and rational in others;" who ſpout compliments extravagantly upon one another†; who ſpeak of their own party as the wiſe and learned, and of their opponents as the ignorant and illiterate, that are carried away by vulgar prejudices; who tax the ſacred writers with "reaſon-

* 1 Cor. i. 26—29. Matt. xi. 25. Rom. iii. 27. † See Mr. Toulmin's Serm. on the death of Mr. Robinſon p. 47, 56.

"ing

" ing inconclusively," and writing " lame ac-
" counts;" and who represent themselves as men of far greater compass of mind than they, or than even Jesus Christ himself.

The last of these particulars may excite surprize. Charity that hopeth all things, will be ready to suggest, surely no man that calls himself a christian will dare to speak so arrogantly. I acknowlege I should have thought so if I had not read in Dr. Priestley's *Illustrations of Philosophical Necessity* as follows, " Not that I think that the sacred writers
" were *necessarians*, for they were not *philosophers*;
" not even our Saviour himself as far as appears;
" —But their habitual devotion naturally led them
" to refer all things to God, without reflecting on
" the rigourous meaning of their language; and
" very probably had they been interrogated on
" the subject, they would have appeared not to
" be apprized of the necessarian scheme, and
" would have answered in a manner unfavourable
" to it." p. 133. The sacred writers it seems were well-meaning people, but at the same time so ignorant as not to know the meaning of their own language; yea, so ignorant that had it been explained to them, they would have been incapable of taking it in! Nor is this suggested of the sacred writers only, but of Jesus Christ himself. A very fit person Jesus Christ must be indeed to be addressed as *knowing all things*, as a *revealer* of the mind of God to men, as *the wisdom of God*, as

him

him in whom *it pleaſed the Father that all fulneſs ſhould dwell*, by whom the Judges of the earth are exhorted to be *inſtructed*, and who ſhall *judge the world* at the laſt day; when in fact he was ſo ignorant as not to conſider the meaning of his own language; or if he had been interrogated upon it, would not have been apprized of the extent of the ſcheme which his words naturally led to, but would probably have anſwered in a manner unfavourable to it! is this the language of one that is *little in his own eyes?*

But there is ſuch a thing as *ſpiritual* pride, or a too high eſteem of ourſelves on account of ſpiritual accompliſhments; and this, together with a ſpirit of *bigotry*, Dr. Prieſtley imputes to trinitarians. "Upon the whole, ſays he, conſidering the great "mixture of ſpiritual pride and bigotry in ſome "of the moſt zealous trinitarians, I think the mo- "ral character of unitarians in general, allowing "that there is in them a greater apparent confor- "mity to the world than is obſervable in the others, "approaches more nearly to the proper temper of "chriſtianity. It is more cheerful, more benevo- "lent, and more candid. The former have pro- "bably leſs, and the latter I hope ſomething more "of a real principle of religion than they ſeem "to have." Vol. Serm. p. 100. To this it is replied.

Firſt,

First, If Trinitarians be proud at all, it ſeems it muſt be of their ſpirituality, for as to rationality they have none, their opponents having by a kind of excluſive charter, monopolized that article. It is their misfortune it ſeems, when inveſtigating the divinity of Chriſt, to be under a "debility of "mind," or a kind of periodical inſanity.

Secondly, Suppoſe it were admitted that a greater degree of ſpiritual pride obtains amongſt trinitarians than amongſt their opponents, if we might for once follow Dr. Prieſtley's example, it might be accounted for without any reflection upon their principles. Pride is a ſin that eaſily beſets human nature, though nothing is more oppoſite to the ſpirit that becomes us; and in whatever it is that a body of men excel, they are under a peculiar temptation to be proud of that rather than of other things. The Engliſh people have been often charged by their neighbours with pride on account of their civil conſtitution; and I ſuppoſe it has not been without reaſon. They have conceived themſelves to excel other nations in that particular, and have been apt to value themſelves upon it, and to undervalue their neighbours, more than they ought. This has been their fault, but it does not prove but that their civil conſtitution after all has it's excellencies; and perhaps the reaſon why ſome of their neighbours have not been ſo proud in this particular as they, is, they have not had that to be

proud of. Chriſtians in general are more likely to be the ſubjects of ſpiritual pride than avowed infidels; the pride of the latter, though it may riſe to the higheſt pitch imaginable, will not be in their ſpirituality. The ſame may be ſaid of Socinians; while a "Great number of them are only men of "good ſenſe, and without much practical reli-"gion," as Dr. Prieſtley acknowleges they are, their pride will not be in their ſpirituality, but in their ſuppoſed rationality.

Thirdly, Let it be conſidered whether our doctrinal principles do not bear a nearer affinity with thoſe principles which in ſcripture are conſtantly urged as a motive to humility, than thoſe of our opponents.—The doctrines inculcated by Chriſt and his apoſtles in order to lay men low in the duſt before God, were thoſe of human depravity, and ſalvation by free and ſovereign grace through Jeſus Chriſt. The language held out by our Lord was, that he *came to ſeek and ſave that which was loſt*. The general ſtrain of his preaching went to inform mankind not only that he came to ſave *loſt* ſinners, but that no man under any other character could partake of the bleſſings of ſalvation. *I came*, ſaith he, *not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance. The whole need not a phyſician, but thoſe that are ſick.* To the ſame purpoſe the apoſtle of the Gentiles declared to the Epheſians, *You hath he quickened who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins: Wherein in time paſt*

paſt ye walked according to the courſe of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience. Nor did he ſpeak this of Gentiles, or profligates only, but though himſelf a Jew, and educated a phariſee, he added, *Among whom alſo we all had our converſation in times paſt, in the luſts of our fleſh, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.* To the doctrine of the univerſal depravity of human nature he very properly and joyfully proceeds to oppoſe that of God's rich mercy—*But God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickened us together with Chriſt.* The humbling doctrine of ſalvation by undeſerved favour was ſo natural an inference from theſe premiſes, that the apoſtle could not forbear throwing in ſuch a reflection, though it were in a parentheſis, *By grace ye are ſaved!* Nor did he leave it there, but preſently after drew the ſame concluſion more fully, *For by grace are ye ſaved through faith, and that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt.* Eph. ii. 1—9. To the ſame purport he taught in his other epiſtles, *Who hath ſaved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpoſe, and grace, which was given us in Chriſt Jeſus, before the world began. Not by works of righteouſneſs which we have*

*done, but according to his mercy he ſaved us. Of him are ye in Chriſt Jeſus, who of God is made unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.**

Theſe we ſee were the ſentiments by which Chriſt and his apoſtles taught men humility, and cut off boaſting. But as though it were deſigned in perfect oppoſition to the apoſtolic doctrine, Socinian writers are conſtantly exclaiming againſt the Calviniſtic ſyſtem becauſe it maintains the inſufficiency of a good moral life, to recommend us to the favour of God. "Repentance and a good "life, ſays Dr. *Prieſtley*, are of themſelves ſuffici-"ent to recommend us to the divine favor†." "When, ſays Mrs. *Barbauld*, will Chriſtians per-"mit themſelves to believe, that the ſame conduct "which gains them the approbation of good men "here, will ſecure the favour of heaven hereaf-"ter?"—"When a man like Dr. Price—is about "to reſign his ſoul into the hands of his Maker, "he ought to do it, ſhe adds, not only with a "reliance on his mercy, but his *juſtice*—It does "not become him to pay the blaſphemous homage "of deprecating the wrath of God, when he "ought to throw himſelf into the arms of his

* 2 Timothy i. 9. Titus iii. 5, 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. † *Hiſt. of Corrup. of Chriſtianity.* Vol. I. p. 155.

"love*."

"love*." "Other foundation than this can no "man lay, ſays Dr. *Harwood*—all hopes founded "upon any thing elſe than a good moral life, are "merely imaginary†." *So they wrap it up.* If a ſet of writers had united together, and ſtudied to form an hypotheſis in perfect contradiction to the holy ſcriptures, and the declared humbling tendency of the goſpel, they could not have hit upon a point more directly to their purpoſe: The whole tenor of the goſpel ſays, *It is not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt*; but Socinian writers maintain that it *is* of works, and of them only; that in this, and in no other way is the divine favour to be obtained. We might aſk, *Where is boaſting then? Is it excluded?* NAY,—it is admitted and cheriſhed.

Chriſt and his apoſtles inculcated humility by teaching the primitive chriſtians that *virtue itſelf* was not of themſelves but the gift of God. They not only expreſsly declared this with reſpect to faith, but the ſame in effect of every ſpecies of Godlineſs. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf*, ſaid Chriſt, *except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me—for without me ye can do nothing. We are his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that*

* Mrs. *Barbauld's* Anſwer to Mr. *Wakefield*. † Dr. *Harwood's Sermons*. p. 193.

we

*we ſhould walk in them. He worketh in us to will, and to do of his good pleaſure**. The manifeſt deſign of theſe ſentiments was to humble the primitive chriſtians, and to make them feel their entire dependence upon God for virtue, even for every *good thought*. *Who maketh thee to differ*, ſaid the apoſtle, *and what haſt thou that thou didſt not receive? Now if thou didſt receive it, why doſt thou glory as if thou hadſt not received it*†? The Calviniſtic ſyſtem, it is well known, includes the ſame things, but where is the place for them, or where do they appear in the ſyſtem of our opponents? Dr. Prieſtley, in profeſſed oppoſition to Calviniſm, maintains that "It depends entirely upon a man's "*ſelf* whether he be virtuous or vicious, happy or "miſerable." On Neceſſity, p. 153. That is to ſay, it is a man's ſelf that maketh him to differ from another, and he has that (namely virtue) which he did not receive, and in which therefore he may glory‡.

Dr.

* John xv. 4, 5 Eph. ii. 10. Phil. ii. 13. † 1 Cor. iv. 7.

‡ It is true, Dr. Prieſtley himſelf ſometimes allows that virtue is *not our own*, and does *not ariſe from within ourſelves*, and calls that mere *heathen Stoiciſm* that maintains the contrary, and tells us that "Thoſe perſons who from a principle of re-"ligion aſcribe more to God, and leſs to man are perſons of "the greateſt elevation in piety." Neceſſity, p. 107, 108. Yet in the ſame performance he repreſents it as a part of the neceſſarian ſcheme by which it is oppoſed to Calviniſm, that it

Dr. Prieſtley replies to this kind of reaſoning, "When we conſider ourſelves as *the workmanſhip* "*of God*; that all our powers, of body and of "mind, are derived from him; that he is *the giver* "*of every good and of every perfect gift*, and that "without him we can do and enjoy nothing, how "can we conceive ourſelves to be in a ſtate of "greater dependence, or obligation? that is, what "greater reaſon or foundation can there poſſibly "be for the exerciſe of *humility*. If I believe that "I have a power to do the duty that God requires "of me; yet as I alſo believe that that power is "his gift, I muſt ſtill ſay, *What have I that I* "*have not received, and how then can I glory, as* "*if I had not received it?*" Conſid. on Diff. of Opin. § III.

It is true Dr. Prieſtley, and for aught I know, all other writers, except atheiſts, acknowlege them-

"it depends entirely upon a man's *ſelf* whether he be virtuous "or vicious." p. 153. If Dr. Prieſtley meant no more by theſe expreſſions than that our conduct in life whether virtuous or vicious depends upon our choice, the Calviniſtic ſcheme as well as his own, allows of this; but if he mean that a virtuous choice originates in ourſelves, and that we are the proper cauſe of it, this can agree to nothing but the Arminian notion of a ſelf-determining power in the Will, and that in fact, as he himſelf elſewhere obſerves, is "Mere *heathen Stoiciſm*, which "allows men to pray for external things, but admoniſhes them "that, as for virtue, it is *our own*, and muſt ariſe *from within* "*ourſelves* if we have it at all." p. 69.

ſelves

ſelves indebted to God for the powers by which virtue is attained, and perhaps for the means of attaining it; but then theſe powers and opportunities are conſidered merely as natural, as having no virtue in them, but as a kind of talent capable of being improved or not improved. Virtue conſiſts not in the powers themſelves, any more than in health, or learning, or riches, but in the uſe that is made of them; God does not, therefore, according to this ſyſtem, give us virtue. According to Paul we are created *in Chriſt Jeſus* unto good works; but according to Dr. Prieſtley we need be only *created*, or endued with natural powers, as we all are by our common Creator. And if ſo, the *difference* between one man and another is not to be aſcribed to God, for it is ſuppoſed that God has given all men the powers of attaining virtue, and that the difference between the virtuous man and his neighbour is to be aſcribed to himſelf, in making a good uſe of the powers and opportunities with which he was inveſted. Upon this ſyſtem therefore, he may juſtly anſwer the queſtion, *What haſt thou which thou haſt not received?* I have *virtue*, and the promiſe of eternal life as it's reward, and conſequently have whereof to glory —Dr. Prieſtley aſks, While they allow themſelves to derive all their powers from God, "how can they conceive themſelves to be in "a ſtate of greater dependence, or obligation?" I anſwer by allowing that we are indebted to the grace of God for *virtue itſelf*. All that he has granted

amounts

amounts to no more than the Heathen Stoicism; which he elſewhere condemns; theſe heathens could not deny that all their powers were originally derived from above, yet they maintained "that as "for virtue, it is *our own*, and muſt ariſe *from* "*within ourſelves* if we have it at all."

I do not deny but that all men have natural powers, together with means and opportunities of doing good, which, if they were but rightly diſpoſed, are equal to the performance of their whole duty. God requires us to love and ſerve him but with *all our ſtrength*. Theſe powers and opportunities are what render them accountable beings, and will leave them without excuſe at the laſt day. But if they are *not* rightly diſpoſed, all their natural powers will be abuſed; and the queſtion is, to whom are we indebted for *a change of diſpoſition?* If to God, we have reaſon to lie in the duſt, and acknowlege it was he that *quickened us, when we were dead in ſins*; if to ourſelves, the doctrine of the Stoics will be eſtabliſhed, and we ſhall have whereof to glory.

I am, &c.

LETTER X.

On Charity; in which is conſidered the charge of Bigotry.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE main reaſon why we are accuſed of ſpiritual pride, bigotry, uncharitableneſs, and the like, is, the *importance* which we aſcribe to ſome of our ſentiments. Viewing them as eſſential to chriſtianity, we cannot acknowlege thoſe who reject them, properly ſpeaking, as chriſtians. It is this that provokes the reſentment of our opponents, and induces them to load us with opprobrious epithets. We have already touched upon this topic in the *Letter on Candor*, but will now conſider it more particularly.

It is allowed that we ought not to judge of whole bodies of men by the denomination under which they paſs; becauſe names do not always deſcribe the real principles they embrace. It is poſſible that a perſon who attends upon a very unſound miniſtry, may not underſtand, or imbibe, ſo much of the ſyſtem which he hears inculcated, as that his temper ſhall be formed, or his conduct regulated by

by it. I have heard from perſons who have been much converſant with Socinians, that though, in general, they are of a looſe diſſipated turn of mind, aſſembling in the gay circles of pleaſure, and following the cuſtoms and manners of the world; yet there are others amongſt them who are more ſerious; and that theſe, if not in their converſation, yet in their ſolemn addreſſes to the Almighty, incline to the doctrines of Calviniſm. This perfectly accords with Mrs. *Barbauld's* repreſentation of the matter, as noticed towards the cloſe of the *Sixth Letter*. Theſe people are not, properly ſpeaking, Socinians; and therefore ought to be left quite out of the queſtion. For the queſtion is, Whether, as believing in the Deity and atonement of Chriſt, with other correſpondent doctrines, we be required by the charity inculcated in the goſpel, to acknowlege thoſe who thoroughly and avowedly reject them, as fellow chriſtians?

It is no part of the buſineſs of this Letter to prove that theſe doctrines are true; this, at preſent, I have a right to take for granted. The fair ſtate of the objection, if delivered by a Socinian, would be to this effect: "Though your ſentiments ſhould be right, yet, by refuſing to acknowlege others who differ from you as fellow chriſtians, you overrate their importance, and ſo violate the charity recommended by the goſpel."

To the objection as thus ſtated I ſhall endeavour to reply.

Charity, it is allowed, will induce us to put the moſt favourable conſtruction upon things, and entertain the moſt favourable opinion of perſons, that truth will admit. It is far from the ſpirit of chriſtianity to indulge a cenſorious temper, or to take pleaſure in drawing unfavourable concluſions againſt any perſon, or perſons whatever; but the tendereſt diſpoſition towards mankind cannot convert truth into falſhood, or falſhood into truth. Unleſs therefore we reject the Bible, and the belief of any thing as neceſſary to ſalvation, though we ſhould ſtretch our good opinion of men to the greateſt lengths, yet we muſt ſtop ſomewhere. Charity itſelf does not ſo *believe all things* as to diſregard truth and evidence. We are ſometimes reminded of our Lord's command, *Judge not leſt ye be judged.* This language is doubtleſs deſigned to reprove a cenſorious diſpoſition, which leads people to paſs *unjuſt* judgment, or to diſcern *a mote in a brother's eye, while they are blind to a beam in their own*; but it cannot be intended to forbid *all* judgment whatever, even upon characters, for this would be contrary to what our Lord teaches in the ſame diſcourſe; warning his diſciples to *beware of falſe prophets, who would come to them in ſheep's cloathing*;—adding, *Ye ſhall know them by their*

*fruits.**

*fruits.** Few men would pretend that we ought to think favourably of profligate characters, or that it is any breach of charity to think unfavourably concerning them. But if the words of our Lord be underſtood as forbidding *all judgment whatever* upon characters, then it is wrong to paſs any judgment upon theſe; yea it muſt be wrong for a miniſter to declare to a drunkard, or a thief, or an adulterer, that if he die in his preſent condition, he muſt expect to periſh; becauſe this is judging the party not to be in a ſtate of ſalvation.

All the uſe that is commonly made of our Lord's words is in favour of *ſentiments*, not of *actions*; but the ſcriptures make no ſuch diſtinction. Men are there treated as being under the wrath of God who have *not believed* on the name of the only begotten Son of God; nor is there any thing intimated in our Lord's expreſſions as if the judgment which he forbad his diſciples to paſs, were to be confined to matters of ſentiment. The judgment which is there reproved is *partial* or *wrong* judgment, whether it be on account of ſentiment or practice. Even thoſe who plead againſt judging perſons on account of ſentiment, many of them at leaſt, allow themſelves to think unfavourably of avowed infidels, who have heard the goſpel, but continue to reject it. They themſelves therefore

* Matt. vii. 1, 2, 3, 15, 16.

do

do judge unfavourably of men on account of their ſentiments, and muſt do ſo, unleſs they will reject the Bible, which declares unbelievers to be under condemnation.

Dr. Prieſtley, however, ſeems to extend his favourable opinion to idolaters and infidels without diſtinction. "All differences in modes of worſhip, "he ſays, may be only the different methods by "which different men (who are equally *the offspring* "*of God*) are endeavouring to honour and obey "their common parent*." He alſo inveighs againſt the ſuppoſition that the mere holding of any *opinions* (ſo it ſeems the great articles of our faith muſt be called) ſhould exclude men from the favour of God. It is true, what he ſays is guarded ſo much, as to give the argument he engages to ſupport a very plauſible appearance; but withal ſo ill directed as not in the leaſt to affect that of his opponents. His words are theſe, "Let thoſe who "maintain that the mere holding of any *opinions*, "(without regard to the *motives and ſtate of mind* "through which men may have been led to form "them) will neceſſarily exclude them from the favour of God, be particularly careful with reſpect to the premiſes from which they draw ſo "alarming a concluſion." The counſel contained in theſe words is undoubtedly very good. Thoſe

* On Diff. of Opin. § II.

premiſes

premiſes ought to be well founded from whence ſuch a concluſion is drawn. Indeed, I do not ſuppoſe that any ground for ſuch a concluſion exiſts; and who they are that draw t I cannot tell. The *mere* holding of an opinion, conſidered abſtractly from the motive, or ſtate of mind, of him that holds it, muſt be ſimply an exerciſe of intellect; and, I am inclined to think, has in it neither good nor evil. But the queſtion is, whether there be not truths that, from the nature of them, cannot be rejected without an evil bias of heart; and therefore when we ſee thoſe truths rejected, whether we have not authority to conclude that ſuch rejection muſt have ariſen from ſuch evil bias?

If a man ſay, *there is no God*, the ſcripture teaches us to conſider it rather as the language of his *heart* than ſimply of his judgment; and makes no ſcruple of calling him a *fool*; which, according to the ſcriptural idea of the term, is equal to calling him a *wicked man*. And let it be ſeriouſly conſidered, upon what other principle could our Lord ſend forth his diſciples to *preach the goſpel to every creature*, and add as he did, *he that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned*. Is it not here plainly ſuppoſed that the goſpel was accompanied with ſuch evidence that no intelligent creature could reject it, but from an evil bias of heart, ſuch as would juſtly expoſe him to damnation? If it had been

been poſſible for an intelligent creature, after hearing the goſpel, to think Jeſus an impoſtor, and his doctrine a lie, without any evil motive, or corrupt ſtate of mind, I deſire to know how the Lord of Glory is to be acquitted of ſomething worſe than bigotry in making ſuch a declaration.

It does not follow from the mere holding of an opinion, irreſpective of the motive or ſtate of mind of him that holds it, being neither good nor evil, that "all differences in modes of worſhip may be "only the different methods by which different "men, who are equally the offspring of God, are "endeavouring to honour and obey their common "parent." Neither did Chriſt or his apoſtles, when they went forth preaching the goſpel, proceed upon any ſuch principle, as I hope hath been ſufficiently proved in the *Letter on Candor*. The principles on which they proceeded were, *an aſſurance that they were of God, and that the whole world were lying in wickedneſs—that he who was of God would hear their words, and he that was not of God, would not hear them—that he that believed their teſtimony, ſet to his ſeal that God was true; and he that believed it not, made God a liar.*

If we conſider a belief of the goſpel, in thoſe who hear it, as eſſential to ſalvation, we ſhall be called bigots; but if this be bigotry, Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles were bigots; and the ſame outcry might

might have been raiſed againſt them, by both Jews and Greeks, as is now raiſed againſt us. Jeſus Chriſt himſelf told the Jews, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins*: and his apoſtles went forth with the ſame language. They wrote and preached that men *might believe that Jeſus was the Chriſt, and that believing, they might have life through his name*. Thoſe who embraced their teſtimony, they treated as in a ſtate of ſalvation; and thoſe who rejected it, were given to underſtand that they had *judged themſelves unworthy of everlaſting life*. In ſhort, they acted as men fully convinced of the truth of what their Lord had declared in their commiſſion, that *He that believeth, and is baptized ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.*

To all this an unbelieving *Jew* might have objected, in that day, with quite as good a grace as Socinians object in this: "Theſe men think, that "our ſalvation depends upon our receiving their "opinions! Have not we been the people of God, "and in a ſtate of ſalvation, time out of mind, "without believing that Jeſus of Nazareth was "the Son of God? Our fathers only believed, in "general, that there was a meſſiah to come, and "were no doubt ſaved in that faith; and we "believe the ſame, and worſhip the ſame God; "and yet according to theſe bigots, if we reject "their opinion concerning Jeſus being the Meſ-

" ſiah, we muſt be *judged unworthy of everlaſting* " *life!*"

An *Heathen* alſo, ſuppoſe one of Paul's hearers at *Athens*, who had juſt heard him deliver the diſcourſe at *Mars-hill*, (recorded in Acts xvii. 22, 31.) might have addreſſed his countrymen, in ſome ſuch language as the following. " This Jewiſh ſtranger, ' Athenians, pretends to make known to us THE ' UNKNOWN GOD. Had he been able to make ' good his pretenſions, and had this been all, we ' might have been obliged to him. But this *un-* ' *known God*, it ſeems, is to take place of all ' others that are known, and be ſet up at their ex- ' pence. Athenians, you have hitherto acted ' worthy of yourſelves, you have liberally admit- ' ted all the gods to a participation of your wor- ' ſhip; but now it ſeems the whole is to be en- ' groſſed by one. You have never been uſed to ' put any conſtraint upon *thought*, or *opinion*, but ' with the utmoſt freedom, have ever been in ' ſearch of *new things*; but this man tells us that ' we OUGHT NOT TO THINK *that the Godhead is* ' *like unto ſilver or gold*, as though we were bound ' to adopt his manner of thinking, and no other. ' —You have been famed for your adoration of ' the gods, and this even your accuſer himſelf has ' borne witneſs to; but yet he has the temerity to ' call it *ſuperſtition*, and what is more, to call us ' to *repentance* for it. It ſeems then we are con-

ſidered

'ſidered in the light of *criminals*, criminals on 'account of our *devotions*, criminals for being *too* 'religious; and for adhering to the religion of 'our anceſtors! Will Athenians endure this? 'Had he poſſeſſed the *liberality* becoming one 'who ſhould addreſs an Athenian audience, he 'would have ſuppoſed that however we might 'have been hitherto miſtaken in our devotions, 'yet our intentions might be good; and that "All the differences in modes of worſhip as prac-"tiſed by Jews, and Athenians, (who are equally "by his own confeſſion, *the offspring of God*) "may have been only different methods, by which "we have been endeavouring to honour and obey "our common parent."—'But neither is this all, 'we are called to repentance, BECAUSE *God hath* '*appointed a day in which he will judge the world*, '&c. So, then, we are to renounce our princi-'ples and worſhip, and embrace his, on pain of 'being called to give account of it before a divine 'tribunal. Future happineſs is to be confined to 'his ſect, and our eternal welfare depends upon 'our embracing his opinions! Could your ears have 'been inſulted, Athenians, with an harangue more 'replete with "*pride, arrogance, and bigotry?*"

'But to ſay no more of his inſulting language, 'the *importance* that he gives to his opinions, if 'there were no other objection, muſt ever be a bar 'to their being received at Athens. You, Atheni-

'ans, are friends to *free-enquiry*; but ſhould our 'philoſophers turn chriſtians, inſtead of being fa-'mous, as heretofore, for the ſearch of *new truth*, 'they muſt ſink into a ſtate of mental ſtagnation. "Thoſe perſons who think that their ſalvation de-"pends upon holding their preſent opinions muſt "neceſſarily entertain the greateſt dread of *free-"enquiry*. They muſt think it to be a hazarding "of their eternal welfare, to liſten to any arguments, "or read any books that favor of idolatry. It "muſt appear to them in the ſame light as liſten-"ing to any other temptation, whereby they would "be in danger of being ſeduced to their everlaſt-"ing deſtruction. This temper of mind cannot "but be a foundation for the moſt deplorable bi-"gotry, obſtinacy, and ignorance."

'The Athenians, I doubt not, will generally 'abide by the religion of their forefathers; but 'ſhould any individuals think of turning Chriſti-'ans, I truſt they will never imbibe that illiberal 'principle of making their opinions neceſſary to 'future happineſs. While this man and his fol-'lowers hold ſuch a notion "of the *importance* of "their preſent ſentiments, they muſt needs live in "the dread of all free-enquiry; whereas we who "have not that idea of the importance of our pre-"ſent ſentiments, preſerve a ſtate of mind proper "for the diſcuſſion of them. If we be wrong, "as our minds are under no ſtrong bias, we are within

"within the reach of conviction, and thus are in "the way to grow wiſer and better as long as we "live."

By the above it will appear, that the apoſtle Paul was juſt as liable as we are to the charge of bigotry.

Thoſe parts which are marked with *double* reverſed comma's, are, with only an alteration of the term *hereſy* to that of *idolatry*, the words of Dr. *Prieſtley* in the *Second Section* of his *Conſiderations on Differences of Opinions*. Judge, brethren, whether theſe words beſt fit the lips of a chriſtian miniſter, or a heathen caviller. The conſequences alleged by the ſuppoſed Athenian againſt **Paul**, are far from juſt, and might be eaſily refuted; but they are the ſame for ſubſtance as thoſe alleged by Dr. Prieſtley againſt us, and the premiſes from which they are drawn are exactly the ſame.

From the whole I think it may be ſafely concluded, If there be any ſentiments taught us in the New Teſtament in a clear and decided manner, this is one, That the apoſtles and primitive preachers conſidered the belief of the goſpel which they preached, as neceſſary to the ſalvation of thoſe who heard it.

But though it ſhould be allowed that a belief of the goſpel is neceſſary to ſalvation, it will ſtill be objected

objected that Socinians believe the goſpel as well as others; their chriſtianity therefore ought not to be called in queſtion on this account. To this it is replied; If what Socinians believe be the goſpel, or, in other words, if it be not wanting in what is eſſential to the goſpel, they doubtleſs ought to be acknowleged as chriſtians; but if otherwiſe, they ought not. It has been pleaded by ſome, who are not Socinians, that we ought to think favourably of all who profeſs to embrace chriſtianity *in general*, unleſs their conduct be manifeſtly immoral. But we have no ſuch criterion afforded us in the New Teſtament, nor does it accord with what is there revealed. The New Teſtament informs us of various *wolves in ſheep's clothing*, who appeared among the primitive chriſtians; men who profeſſed the chriſtian name, but yet were in reality enemies to chriſtianity; who *perverted the goſpel of Chriſt*, and introduced *another goſpel* in it's place.

But theſe men, it is ſaid, not only taught falſe doctrine, but led *immoral lives*. If by immoral be meant groſsly wicked, they certainly did not all of them anſwer to this character. The contrary is plainly ſuppoſed in the account of the falſe apoſtles amongſt the Corinthians, who are called *Deceitful workers, transforming themſelves into the apoſtles of Chriſt. And no marvel, for Satan himſelf is transformed into an angel of light; therefore it is no great thing if his miniſters alſo be transformed as the miniſters*

*niſters of righteouſneſs**. I would not be underſtood as drawing a compariſon between the falſe apoſtles and the Socinians; my deſign in this place is not to inſinuate any thing concerning them, but merely to prove that if we judge favourably of the ſtate of every perſon who bears the chriſtian name and whoſe outward moral character is fair, we muſt judge contrary to the ſcriptures.

To talk of forming a favourable judgment from a profeſſion of chriſtianity *in general*, is as contrary to reaſon and common ſenſe, as it is to the New Teſtament. Chriſtianity in general muſt comprehend ſome of the leading particulars of it. Suppoſe a candidate for a ſeat in the Houſe of Commons on being aſked his political principles, ſhould profeſs himſelf a friend to *liberty in general*. A freeholder enquires, do you diſapprove Sir of taxation without repreſentation? No. Would you vote for a reform in parliament? No. Do you approve of the liberty of the preſs? No. Would this afford ſatisfaction? Is it not common for men to admit that in the groſs, which they deny in detail? The only queſtion that can fairly be urged is, Are the doctrines which Socinians diſown, ſuppoſing them to be true, of ſuch importance, as that a rejection of them ſhould endanger their ſalvation?

* 2 Cor. xi. 13—15.

It muſt be allowed, that theſe doctrines *may* be what we conſider them, not only true, but *eſſential* to chriſtianity. Chriſtianity, like every other ſyſtem of truth, muſt have ſome principles which are eſſential to it; and if thoſe in queſtion be ſuch, it cannot juſtly be imputed to pride, or bigotry, it cannot be uncharitable or uncandid, or indicate any want of benevolence to think ſo. To think juſtly of perſons is in no reſpect inconſiſtent with an univerſal good will towards them. It is not in the leaſt contrary to charity, to conſider unbelievers in the light in which the ſcriptures repreſent them; nor thoſe who reject what is eſſential to the goſpel, as rejecting the goſpel itſelf.

Dr. Prieſtley will not deny that chriſtianity has it's *great truths*, only he will not allow the doctrines in queſtion to make a part of them. "The Being "of a God—his conſtant overruling providence, "and righteous moral government—the divine "origin of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelati-"ons;—that Chriſt was a teacher ſent from God—"that he is our maſter, lawgiver and judge—that "God raiſed him from the dead—that he is now "exalted at the right hand of God—that he will "come again to raiſe all the dead, and ſit in judg-"ment upon them—and that he will then give to "every one of us according to our works"—"Theſe, he ſays, are properly ſpeaking, the *only* "*great truths of religion*; and to theſe not only "the

" the *Church of England*, and the *Church of Scot-*
" *land*, but even the *Church of Rome* gives it's
" aſſent*." We ſee here that Dr. Prieſtley not only allows that there are certain great truths of religion, but determines what, and what " only" they are. I do not recollect, however, that the falſe teachers in the Churches of Galatia denied any one of theſe articles; and yet without rejecting ſome of the *great* and *eſſential* truths of chriſtianity they could not have introduced *another goſpel*, and have *perverted* the goſpel of Chriſt.

But Dr. Prieſtley, it ſeems, though he allows the above to be *great truths*, yet conſiders nothing as *eſſential* to chriſtianity but *a belief of the divine miſſion of Chriſt*. " While a man believes, he " ſays, in the divine miſſion of Chriſt, he might " with as much propriety be called a Mahometan " as be denied to be a chriſtian." *Conſid. on Diff. of Opin.* § V. To call Socinians Mahometans might, in moſt caſes, be improper; they would ſtill, however, according to this criterion of chriſtianity, be within the pale of the Church; for Mahomet himſelf, I ſuppoſe, never denied the divine miſſion of Chriſt, nor very few, if any of thoſe doctrines which Dr. Prieſtley calls " the " *only* great truths, of religion." The Doctor informs us that " Some people conſider him already

* *Fam. Let.* Let. XXII.

" as half a Mahometan*." Whether this be juſt or unjuſt, according to his notions of chriſtianity, a Mahometan is to be conſidered as more than half a chriſtian. He ought, if the above criterion be juſt, to be acknowleged as a fellow chriſtian, and the whole party, inſtead of being ranked along with heatheniſh, and jewiſh unbelievers, as they are by this ſame writer†, ought to be conſidered as a ſect, or denomination of chriſtians. Neither need the Doctor to have ſtopped at the *church of Rome*, but might have added the *church of Conſtantinople* as agreeing in his " only great truths of religion."

I ſcarcely need draw the concluſion which follows from what has been obſerved—If not only they who *perverted the goſpel* amongſt the Galatians, but even the *Mahometans* may acknowlege all thoſe truths which Dr. Prieſtley mentions, they cannot be the *only great*, much leſs the diſtinguiſhing truths of the chriſtian religion.

The difference between Socinians and Calviniſts is not about the mere circumſtantials of religion. It reſpects nothing leſs than the *rule* of faith, the *ground* of hope, and the *object* of worſhip. If they be right, we muſt be habitual idolaters; if we be

* *Pref. to Lett. to Mr. Burn.* † *Fam. Lett.* Let. XVII. Concluſion.

right,

right, they are guilty of the higheſt ſacrilege. It is true, they do not deny our chriſtianity on account of our ſuppoſed idolatry; but no reaſon can be aſſigned for it, except their indifference to religious truth, and the deiſtical turn of their ſentiments.

If the proper Deity of Chriſt be a divine truth, it is a great, and a fundamental truth in chriſtianity. Socinians, who reject it, very conſiſtently reject the worſhip of Chriſt with it. But worſhip enters into the eſſence of religion; and the worſhip of Chriſt according to the New Teſtament, into the eſſence of the chriſtian religion. The primitive chriſtians are characteriſed by their *Calling upon the name of the Lord Jeſus.* The apoſtle in writing to the Corinthians addreſſed himſelf *To the church of God at Corinth, to them that were ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus, called to be ſaints, with all that in every place called upon the name of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord**. That this is deſigned as a deſcription of true chriſtians will not be denied; but

* Mr. Lindſey's obſervations, that *Calling upon the name of Chriſt*, ſhould be rendered *Called by the name of Chriſt*, if applied to Rom. x. 13. would make the ſcriptures promiſe ſalvation to every one that is *called* a chriſtian. Salvation is promiſed to all who *believe, love, fear*, and *obey*; but never are the profeſſors of it deſcribed by a mere accidental circumſtance, in which they are not voluntary, and in which if they were, there is no virtue.

this deſcription does not include Socinians, ſeeing they call not upon the name of Chriſt. The concluſion is, Socinians would not have been acknowleged by the apoſtle Paul as true chriſtians. Again,

If the Deity of Chriſt be a divine truth, it muſt needs be the Father's will that all men ſhould honour the Son in the ſame ſenſe, and to the ſame degree, as they honour the Father; and thoſe who honour him not as God, will not only be found oppoſing the divine Will, but are included in the number of thoſe who, by refuſing to honour the Son, *honour not the Father, who hath ſent him*; which amounts to nothing leſs than that the worſhip which they pay to the Father is unacceptable in his ſight. Again,

If the Deity of Chriſt be a divine truth, he is the object of *truſt*; and that not merely in the character of a witneſs, but as *Jehovah, in whom is everlaſting ſtrength*. This appears to be another characteriſtic of true chriſtians in the New Teſtament. *In his name ſhall the gentiles truſt. I know whom I have truſted; and that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him. In whom ye alſo truſted after ye heard the word of truth, the goſpel of your ſalvation**. But if it be a characteriſtic of true chriſtianity ſo to truſt in Chriſt,

* Matt. xii. 21. 2 Tim. i. 12. Eph. i. 12, 13.

as

as to commit the ſalvation of our ſouls into his hands, how can we conceive of thoſe as true chriſtians who conſider him only as a fellow creature, and conſequently place no ſuch confidence in him. Again,

If men by nature be in a *loſt* and *periſhing* condition; and if Chriſt came to ſeek and ſave them under thoſe characters, as he himſelf conſtantly teſtified; then all thoſe that were whole in their own eyes, and ſeemed to need no phyſician, as the ſcribes and phariſees of old, would neceſſarily be excluded from an intereſt in his ſalvation. And in what other light can thoſe perſons be conſidered, who deny the depravity of their nature, and approach the Deity without reſpect to an atoning ſaviour?—Further,

If the death of Chriſt as an atoning ſacrifice be the only way of a ſinner's ſalvation; if there be *No other name given under heaven, or among men, by which we can be ſaved*; if this be the *foundation which God hath laid in Zion*, and if no other will ſtand in the day of trial; how can we conceive that thoſe who deliberately diſown it, and reject all dependance upon it for acceptance with God, ſhould yet be intereſted in it? Is it ſuppoſable that they will partake of that *forgiveneſs of ſins*, which believers are ſaid to receive *for his ſake*,

and

and *through his name*; who refuſe to make uſe of that name in any of their petitions?

If the doctrine of atonement by the croſs of Chriſt be a divine truth, it conſtitutes the very ſubſtance of the goſpel; and, conſequently, is eſſential to it. The doctrine of the croſs is repreſented in the New Teſtament as the grand peculiarity, and the principal glory of chriſtianity. It occupies a large proportion amongſt the doctrines of ſcripture, and is expreſſed in a vaſt variety of language. Chriſt was *delivered for our offences, wounded for our tranſgreſſions, bruiſed for our iniquities; he died for our ſins, by his death purged our ſins,* is ſaid to *take* (or *bear*) *away the ſins of the world,* to have *made peace through the blood of his croſs, reconciled us to God by his death, redeemed us by by his blood, waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for us, purchaſed his church by his own blood,* &c. &c. This kind of language is ſo interwoven with the doctrine of the New Teſtament, that to explain away the one, is to ſubvert the other. The doctrine of the croſs is deſcribed as being, not merely an important branch of the goſpel, but *the goſpel itſelf. We preach Chriſt crucified; to the Jews a ſtumbling block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs; but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the power of God, and the wiſdom of God. I determined not to know any thing among you ſave Jeſus*

Jus Chriſt and him crucified. An *enemy to the croſs of Chriſt*, is only another mode of ſpeaking for an enemy to the goſpel.* It was reckoned a ſufficient refutation of any principle if it could be proved to involve in it the conſequence of Chriſt having *died in vain.*† Chriſt's *dying for our ſins* is not only declared to be a divine truth, *according with the ſcriptures*; but a truth of ſuch importance that the *preſent ſtanding*, and *final ſalvation* of the Corinthians are ſuſpended upon their adherence to it‡. In fine, the doctrine of the croſs is the central point in which all the lines of evangelical truth meet and are united. What the ſun is to the ſyſtem of nature, that the doctrine of the croſs is to the ſyſtem of the goſpel: it is the life of it. The revolving planets might as well exiſt and keep their courſe without the attracting influence of the one, as for a goſpel to be exhibited, worthy of the name, that ſhould leave out the other.

I am aware that Socinian writers do not allow the doctrine of *atonement* to be ſignified by that of the *croſs*. They would tell you they believe in the doctrine of the croſs, and allow it to have a *relative* or *ſubordinate* importance, rendering the truth of Chriſt's reſurrection more evident, by cutting off all pretence that he was not really dead‖. But the queſtion here is not what they allow. It is ſufficient in this

* 1 Cor. i. 23, 24—ii. 2. † Gal. ii. 21. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 2, 3. ‖ Dr. Prieſtley's Serm. on *Glorying in the Croſs*.

caſe

caſe that we believe otherwiſe. Our calling in queſtion the truth of their chriſtianity on account of their rejection of what *we believe* to be the only way of ſalvation, is no more than their conſidering us as idolaters on account of our worſhipping one whom *they believe* to be a mere creature.

Once more, If we believe in the abſolute neceſſity of *regeneration*, or that a ſinner muſt be renewed in the ſpirit of his mind, or never enter the kingdom of God; in what light muſt we conſider thoſe who plead for only a reformation, and deny the doctrine of a ſupernatural divine influence by which a *new heart is given us, and a new ſpirit put within us?* Ought we, or can we conſider them as the ſubjects of a divine change who are continually ridiculing the very idea of it?

It is common for our opponents to ſtigmatize us with the name of *bigots*. Bigotry, if I underſtand it, is a blind and inordinate attachment to one's own opinions*. If we be attached to principles on account

* The word is ſaid to "Come from the German *bey* and "*Gott*, or the Engliſh *by-God*. Camden relates that the Nor-"mans were called *bigots* on occaſion of their Duke Rollo; "who receiving Giſſa, daughter of King Charles in marriage, "and with her the inveſtiture of the dukedom, refuſed to kiſs "the king's foot, unleſs he would hold it out for that purpoſe: "and being urged to it by thoſe preſent, anſwered haſtily, *No, by-God*, whereupon the king turning about, called him *Bigot*, "which name paſſed from him to his people." It is from hence

count of their being *ours*, or becauſe *we* have imbibed them, rather than becauſe they appear to us to be taught in the Holy Scriptures; if we be attached to *ſome* peculiar principles to the neglect of *others*, or ſo as to give them a greater proportion in the ſyſtem than they require; if we conſider things as being of greater importance than the ſcriptures repreſent them; if we adhere ſo obſtinately to our opinions as to be averſe to free enquiry, and not open to conviction; if we make ſo much of principles as to be inattentive to holy practice; or if a difference in religious ſentiment deſtroy or damp our benevolence to the perſons of thoſe from whom we differ; in any of theſe caſes, we are ſubject to the charge of bigotry. But we may conſider a belief of certain doctrines as neceſſary to ſalvation, without coming under any part of the above deſcription. We may be attached to theſe doctrines, not becauſe we have already imbibed them, but on account of their appearing to us to be revealed in the ſcriptures; we may give them only that proportion and degree of importance in our views of things, which they occupy there; we may be ſo far friends to free enquiry, as impartially to ſearch the ſcriptures to ſee whether theſe things are ſo, and ſo open to conviction as to re-

hence that Mr. CHAMBERS very properly defines a bigot, "A perſon fooliſhly obſtinate, or perverſely wedded to an opi-"nion." Dict. Art. BIGOT.

linquiſh our ſentiments when they are proved to be unſcriptural. We may be equally attached to practical godlineſs, as to the principles on which it is founded; and notwithſtanding our ill opinion of the religious ſentiments of men, and our apprehenſions on the danger of their condition, we may yet bear good will to their perſons, and wiſh for nothing more than an opportunity of promoting their welfare, both for this life and that which is to come.

I do not pretend that Calviniſts are free from bigotry, neither are their opponents; what I here contend for, is, that their conſidering a belief of certain doctrines as neceſſary to ſalvation, unleſs it can be proved that they make more of theſe doctrines than the ſcriptures make of them, ought not to ſubject them to ſuch a charge.

What is there of bigotry in our not reckoning the Socinians chriſtians, more than in their reckoning us *idolaters*? Mr. *Madan* complained of the Socinians "Inſulting thoſe of his principles with "the charge of idolatry." Dr. Prieſtley juſtifies them by obſerving, "All who believe Chriſt to be "a man and not God, muſt neceſſarily *think* it "idolatrous to pay him divine honours; and to "*call* it ſo is no other than the neceſſary conſe-"quence of avowing our belief." Nay, He repreſents it as ridiculous, that they ſhould "be "allowed

" allowed to think the Trinitarians idolaters, with-
" out being permitted to call them ſo." *Fam. Lett.* Let. VI.—If Socinians have a right to think Trinitarians idolaters, they have doubtleſs a right to call them ſo; and if they are able, to make it appear ſo; nor ought we to conſider ourſelves as inſulted by it. I have no notion of being offended with any man, in affairs of this kind, for ſpeaking what he believes to be the truth. We ought not to court compliments of each other, in matters of ſuch moment; but rather encourage an unreſervedneſs of expreſſion, provided it is but accompanied with ſobriety and benevolence. But neither ought Socinians to complain of our refuſing to acknowlege them as chriſtians, or to impute it to a ſpirit of bigotry; for it amounts to nothing more than avowing a neceſſary conſequence of our belief. If we believe the Deity and atonement of Chriſt to be eſſential to chriſtianity, we muſt neceſſarily think thoſe who reject theſe doctrines to be no chriſtians; nor is it inconſiſtent with charity to ſay ſo.

Again, What is there of bigotry in our not allowing the Socinians to be chriſtians, more than in their not allowing us to be *unitarians?* We profeſs to believe in the divine unity as much as they do in chriſtianity. But they conſider an oneneſs of perſon as well as eſſence to be eſſential to the unity of God, and therefore cannot acknowlege us as Unitarians; and we conſider the Deity and atonement

Chriſt as eſſential to chriſtianity, and therefore cannot acknowlege them as chriſtians. *We* do not chuſe to call Socinians Unitarians, becauſe that would be a virtual acknowlegement that we ourſelves do not believe in the divine unity; we are not offended however at what they think of us, nor do we impute it to bigotry, or any thing of the kind. We know while they think as they do on the doctrine of the Trinity, our ſentiments muſt needs appear to them as tritheiſm. We comfort ourſelves in theſe matters with this, that the thoughts of creatures uninſpired of God are liable to miſtake. Such are their's concerning us, and ſuch are our's concerning them; and if Socinians do indeed *love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity*, it is happy for them. The judgment of their fellow-creatures cannot affect their ſtate; and thouſands who have ſcrupled to admit them amongſt the true followers of Chriſt in this world, would rejoice to find themſelves miſtaken, in that matter, at the laſt day.

It has been pleaded by ſome, who are not Socinians, that a belief in the doctrine of the atonement is not neceſſary to ſalvation. They obſerve that the diſciples of our Lord, previous to his death, do not appear to have embraced the idea of a vicarious ſacrifice; and therefore conclude that a belief in a vicarious ſacrifice is not of the eſſence of faith. They add, it was owing to prejudice, and

conſequently

conſequently wrong, for the diſciples to diſbelieve this doctrine, and admit the ſame thing with reſpect to Socinians; yet as the error in the one caſe did not endanger their ſalvation, they ſuppoſe it may not do ſo in the other. To this objection the following obſervations are offered in reply.

Firſt, Thoſe who object in this manner do not ſuppoſe the diſciples of Chriſt to have agreed with Socinians in any of their peculiar ſentiments, except the belief of a *vicarious ſacrifice*. They would allow them to have believed in the doctrines of human depravity, divine influence, the miraculous conception, the pre-exiſtence, and the proper Deity of Chriſt, the inſpiration of the ſcriptures, &c. The caſe of the diſciples therefore is far from being parallel to that of the Socinians.

Secondly, It is not clear that the diſciples did reject the doctrine of a vicarious ſacrifice. They had all their life been engaged in vicarious ſacrifices; it is therefore very improbable that they ſhould be prejudiced againſt the idea itſelf. Their objection to Chriſt's laying down his life ſeems to have been directed ſimply againſt his *dying*, rather than againſt his dying as a *vicarious* ſacrifice. Could they have been reconciled to the former, for any thing that appears, they would have readily acquieſced in the latter. Their objection to the death of Chriſt appears to have been more the

effect

effect of ignorance and miſguided natural affection, than of a rooted oppoſition of principle; and therefore when they came to ſee clearly into the deſign of it, it is expreſſed not as if they had eſſentially altered their ſentiments, but *remembered the words which he had ſpoken to them*; of which, while their minds were beclouded with the notion of a temporal kingdom, they could form no clear or conſiſtent ideas, and therefore had forgotten them*.

Whither I go, ſaith Chriſt, *ye know; and the way ye know*—As if he ſhould ſay, I am not going to a ſtrange place, but to the houſe of my Father, and your Father, with the way to which you are acquainted, and therefore will ſoon be with me. *Thomas ſaith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goeſt, and how can we know the way? Jeſus ſaith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye ſhould have known my Father alſo: and from henceforth ye know him, and have ſeen him*†. From this paſſage it appears that the diſciples had a *general* idea of ſalvation through Chriſt, though they did not underſtand *particularly* how it was to be accompliſhed.—Moreover, Chriſt taught his hearers, ſaying, *Except ye eat my fleſh and drink my blood ye have no life in you—and the bread that*

* Luke xxiv. 6—8. † John xiv. 4—7.

I will

I will give is my flesh, that I will give for the life of the world. On this occasion many of his disciples were offended, and *walked no more with him*; but the true disciples were not offended; on the contrary, being asked, *Will ye also go away? Peter answered, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life**. From this passage it appears plain that the true disciples of Christ were even at that time considered as believing so much on the subject of Christ's giving himself for the life of the world, as to *eat his flesh and drink his blood*; for our Lord certainly did not mean to condemn them as having *no life in them*. So far were they from *rejecting* this doctrine, that the same words at which the false disciples were offended, were to them *the words of eternal life*. Probably this great truth was sometimes more, and sometimes less, apparent to their view. At those periods in which their minds were occupied with the notion of a temporal kingdom, or in which events turned up contrary to their expectations, they would be all in darkness concerning it; yet, with all their darkness, and all their doubts, it does not appear to be a doctrine which they can be said to have *rejected*.

Lastly, Whatever were the ignorance and error which occupied the minds of the disciples relative

* John, vi. 51—68.

to

to the death of their Lord, their caſe will not apply to that of Socinians, on account of the difference in the ſtate of Revelation, as it ſtood before and after that event. Were it even allowed that the diſciples did reject the doctrine of Chriſt's being a vicarious ſacrifice, yet the circumſtances which they were under render their caſe very different from ours. We can perceive a conſiderable difference between rejecting a principle before and after a full diſcuſſion of it. It would be a far greater evil, in the preſent day, to perſecute men for adhering to the dictates of their conſciences, than it was before the rights of conſcience were ſo fully underſtood. It may include a thouſand degrees more guilt, for this country, at the preſent time, to perſiſt in the Slave-Trade, than to have done the ſame thing previous to the late enquiry on that ſubject. But the diſparity between periods with regard to the light thrown on theſe ſubjects, is much leſs than between the periods before and after the death of Chriſt, with regard to the light thrown upon that ſubject. The difference between the periods, before and after the death of Chriſt, was as great as between a period in which a prophecy is unaccompliſhed, and that in which it is accompliſhed. There are many things that ſeem plain in prophecy when the event is paſt, which cannot then be honeſtly denied; and which it may ſeem wonderful that they ſhould ever have been overlooked;

looked; which nevertheleſs till then were either overlooked, or miſunderſtood.

It was after the death of Chriſt, when the means of knowlege began to diffuſe light around them, that the diſciples were for the firſt time reproved for their *ſlowneſs of heart to believe*, in reference to this ſubject. It was after the death and reſurrection of Chriſt, when the way of ſalvation was fully and clearly pointed out, that thoſe who ſtumbled at the doctrine of the croſs were reckoned *diſobedient*, in ſuch a degree as to denominate them unbelievers; and that the moſt awful warnings and threatnings were pointed againſt them, as *treading underfoot the blood of the Son of God*. It is true, our Lord had repeatedly predicted his death, and it was faulty in the diſciples not to underſtand and believe it; but yet what he taught on that ſubject was but little when compared with what followed after. The *great ſalvation*, as the apoſtle to the Hebrews expreſſes it, *Firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord*, and was *confirmed* unto the primitive chriſtians *by thoſe who heard him*; but then it is added, *God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will*; and it is upon this accumulation of evidence that he aſks, *How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation**!

* Heb. ii. 1,—4.

No perſon, I think, who is open to conviction, can be a bigot, whatever be his religious ſentiments. Our opponents, it is true, are very ready to ſuppoſe that this is our general character, and that we are averſe to free enquiry; but this may be more than they are able to prove. We acknowlege that we do not chooſe to circulate books, which we conſider as containing falſe and pernicious doctrines, indiſcriminately among our friends: Neither do other people. I never knew a zealous diſſenter eager to circulate a book containing high-church principles, amongſt his children and connections; nor a churchman thoſe which contain the true principles of diſſent. Nor will an Antitrinitarian propagate the beſt productions of Trinitarians. If they happen to meet with a weak performance, in which the ſubject is treated to a diſadvantage, they may feel no great objection to make it publick; but it is otherwiſe with reſpect to thoſe in which it is treated to advantage. I have known ſome gentlemen, who have affected to poſſeſs what has been called a liberality of mind, who have diſcovered no kind of concern at the indiſcriminate circulation of Socinian productions; but I have alſo perceived that thoſe very gentlemen have not been far from their kingdom of heaven. If any perſon chooſe to read the writings of a Socinian, or of an Atheiſt, he is at liberty to do ſo; but, as the *Monthly Reviewers* themſelves have ſomewhere obſerved, "We are not obliged to aid and aſſiſt in the

the propagation of ſentiments which we do not approve."

As to being open to conviction *ourſelves*, it has been frequently obſerved, that Socinians diſcover as great an averſion to the reading of our writings, as we can diſcover to the reading of their's. Some will read them; but not many. Out of an hundred perſons, whoſe minds lean towards the Socinian ſyſtem, ſhould you put into their hands a well written Calviniſtic performance, and deſire them carefully and ſeriouſly to read it over, I queſtion if five would comply with your requeſt. So far however as my obſervation goes, I can perceive in ſuch perſons an eagerneſs for reading thoſe writings which ſuit their taſte, and a contempt of others, equal, if not ſuperior, to what is perceivable in people of other denominations.

Dr. Prieſtley ſuggeſts that the importance which we give to our ſentiments, tends to prevent an earneſt and impartial ſearch after truth. "While "they imbibe ſuch a notion of their preſent ſenti- "ments, they muſt needs, he ſays, live in the "dread of all free-enquiry; whereas we, who "have not that idea of the importance of our "preſent ſentiments, preſerve a ſtate of mind "proper for the diſcuſſion of them. If we be "wrong, as our minds are under no ſtrong bias, "we are within the reach of conviction; and

" thus are in the way to grow wiſer and better as " long as we live*."

Mr. Belſham however appears to think the very reverſe. He pleads, and I think very juſtly, that an idea of the non-importance of ſentiment tends to deſtroy a ſpirit of enquiry by becalming the mind into a ſtate of indifference and careleſsneſs. He complains of thoſe of his own party (the Socinians) who maintain that " Sincerity is every thing, " that nothing is of much value but an honeſt " heart, and that ſpeculative opinions, the cant " name for thoſe intereſting doctrines which the " wiſe and good in every age, have thought worthy " of the moſt ſerious diſcuſſion, that theſe ſpecu- " lative opinions, as they are opprobriouſly called, " are of little uſe. What is this, adds he, but to " paſs a ſevere cenſure upon thoſe illuſtrious names " whoſe acute and learned labours have been ſuc- " ceſsfully employed in clearing up the difficulties " in which theſe important ſubjects were involved, " to condemn their own conduct in waſting ſo " much of their time and pains upon ſuch uſeleſs " ſpeculations, and to check the progreſs of religi- " ous enquiry, and chriſtian knowlege? Were " I a friend to the popular maxim, that ſpeculative " opinions are of no importance, I would at leaſt " endeavour to act conſiſtent with my principles;

* Diff. of Opin. § II.

I would

"I would content myſelf with believing as my "fathers believed; I would take no pains to ac- "quire or diffuſe knowlege; I would laugh at "every attempt to inſtruct and to meliorate the "world; I would treat as a viſionary and a fool "every one who ſhould aim to extend the limits "of ſcience; I would recommend to my fellow- "creatures that they ſhould neither lie nor defraud, "that they ſhould neither ſwear falſely nor ſteal, "ſhould ſay their prayers as they have been taught; "but as to any thing elſe, that they need not give "themſelves any concern, for that honeſty was "every thing, and that every expectation of im- "proving their circumſtances by cultivating their "underſtandings, and extending their views would "prove deluſive and chimerical." *Serm. on Impor. of Truth*, p. 5, 6.

None will imagine that I have quoted Mr. Belſham on account of my agreement with him in the great principles of the goſpel. What he would reckon important truth, I ſhould conſider as pernicious error; and probably his views of the importance of what he accounts truth, are not equal to what I have attempted to maintain; but, in the general principle we are agreed, namely, *That our conceiving of truth, as being of but little importance, has a tendency to check free enquiry rather than promote it*; which is the very reverſe of what we are taught by Dr. Prieſtley.

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To

To illuſtrate the ſubject more fully: Suppoſe the poſſeſſion of a precious ſtone, of a certain deſcription, to entitle us to the poſſeſſion of ſome very deſirable object; and ſuppoſe that none of any other deſcription would anſwer the ſame end; would that conſideration tend to prejudice our minds in favour of *any* ſtone we might happen to poſſeſs, or prevent an impartial and ſtrict enquiry into it's properties? Would it not rather induce us to be more inquiſitive and careful, leſt we ſhould be miſtaken, and ſo loſe the prize? If on the other hand we could imagine, that any ſtone would anſwer the ſame end, or that an error in that matter were of trifling importance as to the iſſue, would it not have a tendency to promote a ſpirit of careleſſneſs in our examinations; and as all men are apt in ſuch caſes to be prejudiced in favour of what they already have, to make us reſt contented with what we had in poſſeſſion, be it what it might?

It is allowed, however, that as every good has it's counterfeit, and as there is a great mixture of human prejudices and paſſions in all we think or do, there is danger of this principle degenerating into an unchriſtian ſeverity; and of it's being exerciſed at the expence of that benevolence, or good will, which is due to all men. There is nothing however in thoſe views of things, which in it's own nature tends to promote theſe evils; for the moſt unfavourable opinion of a man's principles and

ſtate,

ſtate, may conſiſt with the moſt perfect benevolence and compaſſion towards his perſon. Jeſus Chriſt thought as ill of the principles and ſtate of the Phariſees and Sadducees, and the generality of the Jewiſh nation, as any of us think of one another; yet he wept over Jeruſalem, and to his laſt hour ſought her welfare. The apoſtle Paul had the ſame opinion of the principles and ſtate of the generality of his countrymen as Chriſt himſelf had, and much the ſame as we have of the Socinians. He conſidered them, though they *followed after the law of righteouſneſs*, or were very devout in their way, yet as *not having attained to the law of righteouſneſs*; in other words, that they were not *righteous* perſons; which the Gentiles, who ſubmitted to the goſpel, were. And *wherefore? Becauſe they ſought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law? for they ſtumbled at that ſtumbling ſtone.* Rom. ix. 30, 32. And yet Paul could declare, in the ſame chapter, in the moſt ſolemn manner, that he had *great heavineſs, and continual ſorrow in his heart*—Nay, that *he could have wiſhed himſelf accurſed from Chriſt for his brethren's ſake, his kinſmen according to the fleſh!*

But why need I ſay any more? Dr. Prieſtley himſelf allows all I plead for. "The man, ſays he, whoſe ſole ſpring of action is *a concern for loſt* "*ſouls*, and a care to preſerve the purity of that "goſpel which alone teaches the moſt effectual "method

"method of their recovery from *the power of ſin and Satan unto God*; will feel an ardor of mind "that will prompt him ſtrenuouſly to oppoſe all "thoſe whom he conſiders as obſtructing his "benevolent deſigns." He adds, "I could over-"look every thing in a man who, I thought meant "nothing but my everlaſting welfare*." This and nothing elſe, is the temper of mind which I have been endeavouring to defend; and as Dr. Prieſtley has here generouſly acknowleged the propriety of it, it becomes us to acknowlege on the other hand, that every ſpecies of zeal for ſentiments in which a concern for the everlaſting welfare of men is wanting, is an unhallowed kind of fire, for which, whoever indulges it, will receive little thanks from him whoſe cauſe they may imagine themſelves to have eſpouſed.

I am, &c.

* On *Diff. of Opinion.* § I.

LET-

LETTER XI.

The Syſtems compared as to their influence in promoting the love of Chriſt.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IF the Holy Scriptures be a proper medium by which to judge of the nature of virtue, it muſt be allowed to include *the love of Chriſt*; nay more, that the love of Chriſt is one of the cardinal virtues of the chriſtian ſcheme, ſeeing it occupies a moſt important place in the doctrines and precepts of inſpiration. *He that loveth me*, ſaid Chriſt, *ſhall be loved of my Father. If God were your Father, ye would love me. Whom having not ſeen, ye love, in whom, though now ye ſee him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity. If any man love not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let him be anathema, maranatha**.

From theſe paſſages, with many others that might be collected, we may conclude that the love of Chriſt is not only a chriſtian virtue, but eſſen-

* John xiv. 21.—viii. 42. 1 Pet. i 8. Eph. vi. 24. 1 Cor xvi. 22.

tial to the very exiſtence of chriſtianity: yea to morality itſelf, if by that term be meant a conformity to the moral law. The following lines though expreſſed by a poet, contain more than a mere poetic flight, even the words of truth and ſoberneſs:

"Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love,
"The grand morality is Love of Thee!"

YOUNG.

In judging which of the ſyſtems in queſtion tends moſt to promote love to Chriſt, it ſhould ſeem ſufficient to determine which of them tends moſt to exalt his character, which places his mediation in the moſt important light, and which repreſents us as moſt indebted to his undertaking.

With reſpect to the *firſt*, Every being, provided his goodneſs be equal to his greatneſs, commands our affection in proportion to the degree of intellect which he poſſeſſes. We feel a reſpect towards an animal, and a concern at it's death, which we do not feel towards a vegetable; towards thoſe animals which are very ſagacious, more than thoſe which are otherwiſe; towards man more than mere animals; and towards men of enlarged powers, if they are but good as well as great, more than to men in common. According to the degree of intellect which they poſſeſs, ſo much they have of Being, and of eſtimation or value in the ſcale of

Being

Being. A man is of *more value than many ſparrows*; and the life of David was reckoned to be worth a thouſand of thoſe of the common people. It is on this principle that GOD, poſſeſſing infinitely more exiſtence than all the creatures taken together, and being as good as he is great; is to be loved and revered without any bounds, except what ariſe from the limitation of our powers; that is, *with all our heart, and ſoul, and mind, and ſtrength.*

Now if theſe obſervations be juſt, it cannot be doubted which of the ſyſtems in queſtion tends moſt to promote the love of Chriſt; that which ſuppoſes him to be equal, or one with God, or that which reduces him to the ſcale of a mere fellow-creature. In the ſame proportion that God himſelf is to be loved above man, is Chriſt to be loved, ſuppoſing him to be truly God, above what he is, or ought to be, ſuppoſing him to be merely a fellow man.

The prophets, apoſtles, and primitive chriſtians, ſeem to have felt this motive in all it's force. Hence in their various expreſſions of love to Chriſt, they frequently mingle acknowlegements of his dignity and divine excellency. They indeed never ſeem afraid of going too far, or of honouring him too much, but dwell upon the dignity and glory of his perſon, as their darling theme. When David was upon this ſubject he was raiſed above himſelf. *My heart,*

was indeed his Lord, and no other, ſaying; MY LORD, AND MY GOD!—The whole *Epiſtle to the Hebrews* breathes an ardent love to Chriſt, and is intermingled with the ſame kind of language. Jeſus is there repreſented as UPHOLDING ALL THINGS BY THE WORD OF HIS POWER; as the object of ANGELIC ADORATION; as he to whom it was ſaid, THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOR EVER AND EVER; as he who LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, adding, that THE HEAVENS WERE THE WORK OF HIS HANDS; as ſuperior to Moſes, the one being the BUILDER, *and* OWNER *of his houſe*, even GOD *that built all things*, and the other only a ſervant in it; as ſuperior to Aaron, and all thoſe of his order, A GREAT *high prieſt*, *Jeſus* THE SON OF GOD. Hence the goſpel is conſidered as exhibiting a GREAT *ſalvation*, and thoſe who *neglect* it as expoſed to a recompence of wrath which they *ſhall not eſcape**.

Paul could ſcarcely mention the name of Chriſt without adding ſome ſtrong encomium or other in his praiſe. When he was enumerating thoſe things which rendered his countrymen dear to him, he mentions their being *Iſraelites*, to whom pertained the *adoption*, and the *glory*,, and the *covenants*, and the *giving of the law*, and the *ſervice of God*,

* John i. —. xx. 24, 28. Heb. i. 3, 6, 8, 10.—iii. 3, 4, 5, 6.—iv. 14.—ii. 3.

and

*go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.**

The apoſtles, who ſaw the Lord, who ſaw the accompliſhment of what the prophets foretold, were not diſappointed in him. Their love to him was great, and their repreſentations of his perſon and character ran in the ſame exalted ſtrain. *In the beginning was the Word*, ſaid the beloved diſciple, *and the Word was with God, and the Word* WAS GOD. *The ſame was in the beginning with God. All things* WERE MADE BY HIM, AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANY THING MADE THAT WAS MADE. *He was in the world, and* THE WORLD WAS MADE BY HIM, *and the world knew him not. And the Word was made fleſh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of* THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER) *full of grace and truth.* —*Thomas* inſiſted upon an unreaſonable, and apparently cruel kind of evidence, of the reſurrection of his Lord from the dead; ſaying, *Except I ſhall ſee in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thruſt my hand into his ſide, I will not believe.* When reproved by our Lord's offering to gratify him in his incredulous propoſal; he confeſſed with a mixture of ſhame, grief, and affection, that however unbelieving he had been, he was now ſatisfied that it

* Pſal. xlv. 1—6. Iſai. ix. 6.—xl. 3, 10, 11. Luke i. 76.

was indeed his Lord, and no other, ſaying; MY LORD, AND MY GOD!—The whole *Epiſtle to the Hebrews* breathes an ardent love to Chriſt, and is intermingled with the ſame kind of language. Jeſus is there repreſented as UPHOLDING ALL THINGS BY THE WORD OF HIS POWER; as the object of ANGELIC ADORATION; as he to whom it was ſaid, THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOR EVER AND EVER; as he who LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, adding, that THE HEAVENS WERE THE WORK OF HIS HANDS; as ſuperior to Moſes, the one being the BUILDER, *and* OWNER *of his houſe*, even GOD *that built all things*, and the other only a ſervant in it; as ſuperior to Aaron, and all thoſe of his order, A GREAT *high prieſt*, *Jeſus* THE SON OF GOD. Hence the goſpel is conſidered as exhibiting a GREAT *ſalvation*, and thoſe who *neglect* it as expoſed to a recompence of wrath which they *ſhall not eſcape**.

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* John i. —. xx. 24, 28. Heb. i. 3, 6, 8, 10.—iii. 3, 4, 5, 6.—iv. 14.—ii. 3.

and

and the *promiſes*; whoſe were the *fathers*, and of whom, as concerning the fleſh, *Chriſt came*. Here it ſeems he might have ended; but having mentioned the name of Chriſt, he could not content himſelf without adding; WHO IS OVER ALL, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER. *Amen*. Having occaſion alſo to ſpeak of him in his epiſtle to the Coloſſians, as *God's dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſins*; he could not forbear adding, *Who is the image of the inviſible God, the firſt-born of every creature. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, viſible, and inviſible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created* BY *him, and* FOR *him: and he is before all things, and by him all things conſiſt* !*

And now, chriſtian brethren, I might appeal to you on the juſtneſs of Dr. Prieſtley's aſſertion, that "In no ſenſe whatever, not even in the loweſt of "all, is Chriſt ſo much as called *God* in all the "New Teſtament†." I might appeal to you, whether ſuch language as the above would ever have proceeded from the ſacred writers, had they embraced the ſcheme of our opponents. But waving theſe particulars as irrelative to the immediate point in hand, I appeal to you whether ſuch love as the prophets and apoſtles expreſſed towards Chriſt could

* Rom. ix. 4, 5. Col. i. 13—17. † *Letters to Mr. Burn.*

conſiſt

conſiſt with his being merely a fellow creature; whether the manner in which they expreſſed it, upon the principles of our opponents, inſtead of being acceptable to God, could have been any other than the height of extravagance, and the eſſence of idolatry? Judge alſo for yourſelves, brethren, which of the ſyſtems in queſtion has the greateſt tendency to promote ſuch a ſpirit of love to Chriſt as is here exemplified; that which leads us to admire theſe repreſentations, and on various occaſions to adopt the ſame expreſſions; or that which employs us in coldly criticiſing away their meaning; that which leads us without fear to give them their full ſcope, or that which, while we are honouring the Son, would affright us leſt we ſhould in ſo doing diſhonour the Father?

The next queſtion to be diſcuſſed is, *Which of the two ſyſtems places the mediation of Chriſt in the moſt important point of light?* That ſyſtem which finds the greateſt *uſe* for Chriſt, or in which he occupies the moſt important place, muſt have the greateſt tendency to promote love to him. Suppoſe a ſyſtem of politics were drawn up, in which *civil liberty* occupied but a very ſmall proportion; was generally kept out of view; or, if when brought forward, it was either for the purpoſe of abating the high notions which ſome people entertain of it, or at leaſt, of treating it as a matter not abſolutely neceſſary to good civil government; who would venture

venture to aſſert, that ſuch a ſyſtem was friendly, or it's abettors friends, to civil liberty? This is manifeſtly a caſe in point. The Socinian ſyſtem has but little uſe for Chriſt; and none at all, as an atoning ſacrifice. 'It ſcarcely ever mentions him; unleſs it be to depreciate thoſe views of his dignity which others entertain; or in ſuch a way as to ſet aſide the abſolute neceſſity of his mediation.

It is not ſo in our views of things. We find ſo much uſe for Chriſt, if I may ſo ſpeak, that he appears as the *ſoul* that animates the whole body of our divinity; as the centre of the ſyſtem, diffuſing light and life to every part of it. Take away CHRIST, yea, take away the Deity and atonement of Chriſt, and the whole ceremonial of the Old Teſtament appears to us little more than a dead maſs of unintereſting matter; prophecy loſes almoſt all that is intereſting and endearing; the goſpel is annihilated, or ceaſes to be that *good news* to loſt ſinners which it profeſſes to be; practical religion is diveſted of it's moſt powerful motives; the evangelical diſpenſation of it's peculiar glory, and heaven itſelf of it's moſt tranſporting joys.

The ſacred penmen appear to have written all along upon the ſame principles. They conſidered CHRIST as the *All in all* of their religion, and, as ſuch, they loved him with their whole hearts. Do they ſpeak of the *firſt Tabernacle?* they call it a *figure*

for the time then preſent, in which were offered both gifts and ſacrifices, that could not make him that did the ſervice perfect as pertaining to the conſcience. But CHRIST *being come an High Prieſt of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is to ſay, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the Holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* Do they ſpeak of prophecy? they call the teſtimony of Jeſus the *ſpirit* of it. Of the goſpel? it is *Chriſt crucified.* Of the medium by which the world was crucified to them, and they unto the world? it is the ſame. The very *reproach of Chriſt* had a value ſtamped upon it, ſo as, in their eſteem, to ſurpaſs all the treaſures of the preſent world. One of the moſt affecting ideas which they afford us of heaven conſiſts in aſcribing everlaſting glory and dominion *to him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood. Ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands* were heard *with a loud voice, ſaying worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing* !*

Let us ſelect a particular inſtance in the character of Paul. This apoſtle ſeemed to be ſwallowed

* Heb. ix. 9—11. Rev. xix. 10. 1 Cor. i. 23. Gal. vi. 14. Heb. xi. 26. Rev. v. 11, 12.

up

up in love to Chriſt. His mercy to him as one of *the chief of ſinners*, had bound his heart to him with bands of everlaſting gratitude. Nor was this all; as he knew him, he ſaw that glory in his perſon, office, and character which eclipſed all created objects, which crucified the world to him, and him unto the world. *What things were gain*, ſaith he, *thoſe I counted loſs for Chriſt. Yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowlege of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord; for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things.* Nor did he now repent, for he adds, *and do account them but dung that I may win Chriſt, and be found in him, not having mine own righteouſneſs which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith—That I may know him, and the power of his reſurrection, and the fellowſhip of his ſufferings, being made conformable unto his death.* When his friends wept becauſe he would not be diſſuaded from going up to Jeruſalem, he anſwered, *What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but alſo to die at Jeruſalem* FOR THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS! Feeling an ardent love to Chriſt himſelf, he vehemently deſired that others might love him too. *For this cauſe he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, in behalf of the Epheſians, praying that CHRIST *might dwell in their hearts by faith.* He repreſented him to them as the medium of all ſpiritual bleſſings;

of *election, adoption, acceptance with God, redemption,* and *the forgiveneſs of ſins*; of a future *inheritance,* and of a preſent *earneſt* of it; as *the head over all things to the Church,* and as *him that* FILLETH ALL IN ALL. He deſcribed him as the only way of *acceſs to God,* and the ſole *foundation* of their hope; whoſe *riches were unſearchable,* and the dimenſions of his love *paſſing knowlege**.

If any drew back, or deviated from the ſimplicity of the goſpel, he felt a moſt ardent thirſt for their recovery; witneſs his Epiſtles to the Corinthians, the Galatians, and (if, as is generally ſuppoſed, he was the writer of it) to the Hebrews. If any who drew back were not to be reclaimed, he declared he had *no pleaſure in them*; and whatever might be their mind, like Joſhua, he was at a point himſelf. *Henceforth,* he exclaims, *let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jeſus.* If he wiſhed to *live,* it was for Chriſt; or if to *die,* it was to be with him. He invoked the beſt of bleſſings on thoſe who loved the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, and denounced an *anathema maran-atha* on thoſe who loved him not†.

The reaſon why I have quoted all theſe paſſages is to ſhew, that the primitive goſpel was *full of*

* Phil. iii. 7—10. Acts xxi. 13. Eph. Ch. i, ii, iii. † Heb. x. 38. Gal. vi. 17 Phil. i. 20, 21. Eph. 6. 24. 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

Chriſt;

Chriſt; or that Chriſt was, as it were, the centre and life of the evangelical ſyſtem; and that this it's leading and principal characteriſtic tended wonderfully to promote the love of Chriſt. Now, brethren, let me appeal to you again, which of the ſyſtems in queſtion is it which reſembles that of the Apoſtles in this particular, and conſequently has the greateſt tendency to promote love to Chriſt? That of which Chriſt is the *All in all*; or that in which he is ſcarcely ever introduced, except for the purpoſe of repreſenting him as a "mere fellow-"creature, a fallible and peccable man?"

The *Third*, and laſt queſtion to be diſcuſſed, (if, indeed, it needs any diſcuſſion) is, *Which of the two ſyſtems repreſents us as moſt indebted to Chriſt's undertaking?* Our Lord himſelf has laid it down as an uncontrovertable rule, that *thoſe who had much forgiven would love him much; but thoſe who had little forgiven would love him but little.* That ſyſtem therefore which ſuppoſes us the greateſt debtors to forgiving love, muſt needs have the greateſt tendency to promote a return of love.

In the firſt place, Our views with reſpect to *the depravity of human nature* are ſuch, that upon our ſyſtem, we have much more to be forgiven, than our opponents have upon their's. We ſuppoſe ourſelves to have been utterly depraved, our very nature totally corrupted, and conſequently that all

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our ſuppoſed virtues, while our hearts were at enmity with God, were not virtue in reality, but wanting in the very eſſence of it. We do not therefore conceive of ourſelves, during our unregeneracy, as having been merely *ſtained* by a few *imperfections*, but as *altogether polluted*, by a courſe of apoſtacy from God, and black rebellion againſt him. That which is called *ſin*, by our opponents, muſt conſiſt chiefly, if not entirely, in the irregularity of a man's outward conduct; elſe they could not ſuppoſe, as Dr. Prieſtley does, that "Virtue bears the ſame proportion to vice that happineſs does to miſery, or "health to ſickneſs, in the world*—" That is, that there is much more of the former than of the latter. But the mere outward irregularities of men bear no more proportion to the whole of their depravity, according to our views of it, than the particles of water which are occaſionally emitted from the ſurface of the ocean, to the tide that rolls beneath. The religion of thoſe who make ſin to conſiſt in little beſides outward irregularities, or who conceive of the virtues of men as greatly exceeding their vices, appears to us to reſemble the religion of Paul previous to his converſion to chriſtianity. While he thought of nothing but the irregularities of his exterior conduct, his virtues doubtleſs appeared to him to outweigh his vices; and therefore he concluded all was well; that he was in a fair way to everlaſting happineſs; or, as he himſelf ex-

preſſes

preſſes it, *alive without the law.* But when, through the glaſs of that divine *commandment* which prohibits the very inclination to evil, he ſaw the corruption that reigned within, tranſgreſſion aſſumed a very different appearance; it was then a mighty ocean, that ſwelled, and ſwept off all his legal hopes—*Sin revived, and he died.* In ſhort, our views of human depravity induce us to conſider ourſelves, by nature, as *unworthy*, as *loſt*, and *ready to periſh*: ſo that if we are ſaved at all, it muſt be by rich grace, and by a great Saviour. I ſcarcely need to draw the concluſion, that having according to our ſyſtem, moſt to be forgiven, we ſhall, if we truly enter into it, love moſt.

But farther; Our ſyſtem ſuppoſes a much greater malignity, or evil in ſin, than that of our opponents. When we ſpeak of ſin, we do not love to deal, as Mr. Belſham does, in extenuating names. We find no anthority for calling it "human frailty;" or for affixing any idea to it that ſhall repreſent us rather as objects worthy of the compaſſion of God, than as ſubjects of that which his ſoul abhorreth. We do not ſee how Mr. Belſham, or thoſe of his ſentiments, while they ſpeak of moral evil in ſo diminutive a ſtyle, can poſſibly conceive of it after the manner of the inſpired writers, as an *evil and bitter thing*; or, as it is expreſſed in that

remarkable

remarkable phraſe of the apoſtle Paul, *exceeding ſinful**.

Our opponents deny ſin to be in any ſenſe an infinite evil; or, which is the ſame thing, deſerving of endleſs puniſhment; or that ſuch puniſhment will follow upon it. Nobody, indeed, ſuppoſes that ſin is *in all reſpects* infinite. As committed by a finite creature, and admitting of different degrees, it muſt in thoſe reſpects be finite, and will doubtleſs be puniſhed hereafter with different degrees of puniſhment; but as committed againſt a God of infinite excellence, and as tending to infinite anarchy and miſchief; in thoſe reſpects it muſt needs be infinite. All that is meant, I ſuppoſe, by calling ſin an infinite evil is, that it is deſerving of endleſs puniſhment; and this can never be fairly objected

* The expreſſions *exceeding ſinful*, are very forcible. They reſemble the phraſe *far more exceeding*, or rather *exceſſively exceeding*, in 2 Cor. iv. 17. It ſeems that the Holy Spirit himſelf could not find a worſe name for ſin than it's own. If we ſpeak of a treacherous perſon we call him a *Judas*; if of Judas, we call him *a devil*; but if of Satan, we want a compariſon, becauſe we can find none that is worſe than himſelf. We muſt therefore ſay as Chriſt did, *When he ſpeaketh a lie, he ſpeaketh of his own.* It was thus with the apoſtle when ſpeaking of the evil of his own heart, *That ſin by the commandment* might become—what? he wanted a name worſe than it's own—he could not find one—he therefore unites a ſtrong epithet to the thing itſelf, calling it *exceeding ſinful.*

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to as an abſurdity. If there be no abſurdity in the immortality of a ſinner's exiſtence, there is none in ſuppoſing him to deſerve a puniſhment, be it in what degree it may, that ſhall run commenſurate with it. There is no abſurdity in ſuppoſing a ſinner to have been guilty of ſuch crimes as to deſerve miſery for as long a duration as he is capable of ſuſtaining it. But whatever may be ſaid as to the truth or untruth of this ſentiment, thus much is clear, that in proportion as our opponents conceive diminutively of the evil of ſin, they diminiſh the grace of forgiveneſs; and if that forgiveneſs come to us through Chriſt, (as is plainly implied in their loving *him* moſt who have moſt forgiven) it muſt needs follow that in the ſame proportion the love of Chriſt is ſapped at the foundation.

Once more; The *expence* at which we ſuppoſe our forgiveneſs to have been obtained is a conſideration which endears to us both the gift and the giver. We do not conceive of Chriſt, in his beſtowment of this bleſſing upon us, as preſenting us with that which coſt him nothing! If the portion given by Jacob to his ſon Joſeph was heightened and endeared by it's being obtained *by the ſword and the bow*; much more is a title to eternal life, by it's being obtained through the death of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. It is this that attracts the hearts of

thoſe who are deſcribed as ſinging a new ſong to their Redeemer; *Thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood; out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation.*

It does not appear, from any thing I have ſeen, that the ſyſtem of our opponents can with any plauſibility be pretended to equal our's with reſpect to the love of Chriſt. All that can be alleged, with any colour of reaſon, all however that I have noticed, is this; That in proportion as we, in this way, furniſh motives of love to Chriſt, we detract from thoſe of love to the Father, by diminiſhing the freeneſs of his grace, and exhibiting him as one that was incapable of beſtowing forgiveneſs, unleſs a price was paid for it. To this it is replied; If the incapacity of the Father to ſhew mercy without an atonement conſiſted in a want of love, or any thing of natural implacability, or even a reluctance as to the beſtowment of mercy, there would be force in the objection: but if it be no other than the incapacity of a righteous governor, who, whatever good will he may have to an offender, cannot bear the thought of paſſing by the offence without ſome publick expreſſion of diſpleaſure againſt it, that while mercy triumphs it may not be at the expence of law, of equity, and of the

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general good; ſuch an incapacity rather infers a perfection than an imperfection in his nature; and inſtead of diminiſhing our regard for his character, muſt have a powerful tendency to increaſe it.

I am, &c.

LET-

LETTER XII.

On Veneration for the Scriptures.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IF we may judge of the nature of true piety, by the examples of the prophets and holy men of old, we may conclude with certainty that an affectionate attachment to the Holy Scriptures, as the rule of faith and practice, enters deeply into the ſpirit of it. The Holy ſcriptures were deſcribed by David, under the names of the *word*, *ſtatutes*, *laws*, *precepts*, *judgments*, and *teſtimonies* of God; and to theſe, all through the pſalms, eſpecially in the 119th, he profeſſes a moſt ardent attachment. Such language as the following was very common with him, as well as others of the Old Teſtament writers: *O how I love thy law! Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lantern to my path. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. My ſoul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. Thy ſtatutes have been my ſongs in the houſe of my pilgrimage. The law of*

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thy mouth is better to me than thouſands of gold and ſilver.

Dr. Prieſtley often profeſſes great regard for the ſacred writings, and is very ſevere on Mr. *Burn* for ſuggeſting, that he denied "The infallibility "of the apoſtolic teſtimony, concerning the per-"ſon of Chriſt." He alſo tells Dr. *Price*, "No "man can pay a higher regard to *proper* ſcripture "authority than I do." We may therefore take it for granted, that a regard for the authority of ſcripture is a virtue, a virtue that our opponents as well as we, would be thought to poſſeſs.

I wiſh in this Letter to enquire, ſuppoſing the ſacred writers to be honeſt and good men, what a "*proper*" regard to the authority of their writings includes, and to compare it with the avowed ſentiments of our adverſaries. By theſe means, Brethren, you may be the better able to judge for yourſelves, whether the ſpirit which animates the whole body of Socinian divinity does not breathe a language unfriendly to the ſacred writings, and carry in it ſomething hoſtile to *every thought being ſubdued to the obedience of Chriſt*.

In order to judge what is a *proper* regard for ſcriptural authority, it is neceſſary in the firſt place, to have recourſe to the *profeſſions* of the ſacred writers concerning what they wrote. If any man

venerate

venerate the authority of ſcripture, he muſt receive it as BEING WHAT IT PROFESSES TO BE, AND FOR ALL THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH IT PROFESSES TO BE WRITTEN. If the ſcriptures profeſs to be divinely inſpired, and aſſume to be the infallible ſtandard of faith and practice, we muſt either receive them as ſuch; or, if we would be conſiſtent, diſown the writers as impoſtors.

The profeſſions of the ſacred writers are as follows: *The Spirit of the Lord ſpake by me, and his word was in my tongue; the God of Iſrael ſaid, the Rock of Iſrael ſpake to me. Thus ſaith the Lord. And Jehoſhaphat ſtood, and ſaid, hear me O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jeruſalem, Believe in the Lord your God, ſo ſhall ye be eſtabliſhed; believe his prophets, ſo ſhall ye proſper.**

New Teſtament writers bore ample teſtimony to the inſpiration of thoſe under the Old Teſtament. *All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works. No prophecy of the ſcripture is of private interpretation*—it is not to be conſidered as the private opinion of a fallible man, as is the caſe with other productions—*for the prophecy came not*

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3. Iſai. xliii. 1. 2 Chron. xx. 20.

in

*in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt**.

Nor did the New Teſtament writers bear teſtimony to the inſpiration of the prophets only, but conſidered *their own writings* as equally inſpired. *If any man think himſelf to be a prophet, or ſpiritual, let him acknowlege that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.* Peter ranks the Epiſtles of Paul with *other ſcriptures*†. There ſeems to have been one inſtance in which Paul diſowned his having received any *commandment from the Lord*, and in which he proceeded to give his own private *judgment*; (1 Cor. vii. 25.) but this appears to have been a particular exception from a general rule, of which notice was expreſsly given, an exception therefore which tends to ſtrengthen rather than weaken the argument for apoſtolic inſpiration.

As the ſacred writers conſidered themſelves as divinely inſpired, ſo they repreſented their writings as the infallible teſt of divine truth, to which all appeals were to be made, and by which every controverſy in religious matters was to be decided. *To the law, and to the teſtimony; if they ſpeak not according to this rule, it is becauſe there is no light*

* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. † 1 Cor. xiv. 37. 2 Pet. iii. 16.

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*in them. Theſe are the true ſayings of God. That which is noted in the ſcriptures of truth. What ſaith the ſcriptures? Search the ſcriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which teſtify of me. The Bereans ſearched the ſcriptures daily whether thoſe things were ſo**.

The ſacred writers did not ſpare to denounce the moſt awful judgments upon thoſe who ſhould either pervert their writings, add to them, or detract from them. Thoſe who wreſted the apoſtolic epiſtles are ſaid to have *wreſted them, as they did the other ſcriptures, to their own deſtruction. Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other goſpel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed. Whatever thing I command you, obſerve and do it; thou ſhalt not add thereto nor diminiſh from it. If any man ſhall add unto theſe things, God ſhall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man ſhall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God ſhall take away his part out of the book of life†!*

Nothing ſhort of the moſt perfect divine inſpiration could juſtify ſuch language as this, or ſecure thoſe who uſed it from the charge of bold preſumption, and baſe impoſition.

* Iſai. viii. 20. Rev. xix. 9. Dan. x. 21. Rom. iv. 3. John v. 39. Acts xvii. 11. † 2 Pet. iii. 16. Gal. i. 8 Deut. xii. 23 Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

Dr.

Dr. Prieſtley often profeſſes great regard for the ſcriptures, and, as hath been obſerved before, is very ſevere on Mr. Burn for repreſenting him as denying "The infallibility of the apoſtolic teſti-"mony concerning the perſon of Chriſt." Far be it from me to wiſh to repreſent the ſentiments of Dr Prieſtley in an unfair manner, or in ſuch a light as he himſelf could juſtly diſavow. All I mean to do, is to quote a paſſage or two from his own writings, and add a few remarks upon them.

Speaking in favour of reverence for the ſacred books, he ſays, "Not that I conſider the books of "ſcripture as *inſpired*, and on that account en-"titled to this high degree of reſpect, but as au-"thentic records of the diſpenſations of God to "mankind, with every particular of which we "cannot be too well acquainted."

Again, "If you wiſh to know what, in my "opinion, a chriſtian is bound to believe with re-"ſpect to the *ſcriptures*, I anſwer, that the books "which are univerſally received as *authentic*, are "to be conſidered as faithful records of paſt tranſ-"actions, and eſpecially the account of the inter-"courſe that the Divine Being has kept up with "mankind from the beginning of the world to the "time of our Saviour, and his apoſtles. No "chriſtian is anſwerable for more than this.—The "writers of the books of ſcripture were *men*, and

" therefore *fallible*; but all that we have to do " with them is in the character of *hiſtorians*, and " *witneſſes* of what they heard and ſaw. Of courſe " their credibility is to be eſtimated like that of other " hiſtorians, viz. from the circumſtances in which " they wrote, as with reſpect to their opportuni- " ties of knowing the truth of what they relate, " and the biaſſes to which they might be ſubject. " Like all other hiſtorians they were liable to miſ- " takes, with reſpect to things of ſmall moment, " becauſe they might not give ſufficient attention " to them; and with reſpect to their *reaſoning*, we " are fully at liberty to judge of it as well as that " of any other men, by a due conſideration of the " propoſitions they advance, and the arguments " they allege. For it by no means follows be- " cauſe a man has had communications with the " Deity for certain purpoſes, and he may be de- " pended upon with reſpect to his account of " thoſe communications, that he is in other re- " ſpects more wiſe, and knowing than other " men." Lett. to a P. U. p. II. pref. p. xiii. and Let. V.

" You ſay, ſays he in his *Letters to Dr. Price*, " that I do not allow of ſcriptural authority, but " indeed my friend, you ſhould have expreſſed " yourſelf with more caution. No man can pay " a higher regard to *proper* ſcriptural authority " than I do; but neither I, nor I preſume yourſelf, " believe

" believe implicitly every thing that is advanced " by any writer in the Old or New Teſtament. I " believe all the writers, without exception, to " have been men of the greateſt probity, and to " have been well informed of every thing of con- " ſequence of which they treat; but at the ſame " time I believe them to have been *men*, and con- " ſequently *fallible*, and liable to miſtake with " reſpect to things to which they had not given " much attention, or concerning which they had " the means of exact information; which I take not " to be the caſe with reſpect to the account that " Moſes has given of the creation and the fall of " man." In a late performance entitled *Letters to the Philoſophers and Politicians of France*, Dr. Prieſtley ſpeaks much in the ſame ſtrain. " That " the books of ſcripture he ſays were written by " particular divine inſpiration, is a thing to which " the writers themſelves make no pretenſions. It " is a notion deſtitute of all proof, and that has " done great injury to the evidence of Chriſtiani- " ty." p. 38.

From this account, taken all together, you will obſerve, Chriſtian brethren, that Dr. Prieſtley does not believe either the Old or the New Teſtament to be *divinely inſpired*; to be ſo inſpired as that he is " bound implicitly to believe every thing (and " might he not have added *anything?*) which the " writers of thoſe books advance." He does not

believe that the ſcriptures are *a rule of faith and practice*, but mere "faithful records of paſt tranſactions;" or that there is any *authority* attending them, excepting what attends any other honeſt and well informed hiſtorian; nor even that in many caſes, for he maintains that "No chriſtian is "bound to conſider any of the books of ſcripture "as faithful records of paſt tranſactions, unleſs "they have been "*univerſally* received as authen-"tic." That is, if any perſon, at any period, have thought proper to diſpute the authenticity of any of theſe writings, that part immediately ceaſes to have any claim upon poſterity, and may be rejected with impunity. And even thoſe writers, whoſe works upon the whole are allowed as authentic, are ſuppoſed to have written upon ſubjects "to which they had not given much attention, "and concerning which they were not poſſeſſed "of ſufficient means of information;" and conſequently in thoſe caſes are not to be regarded. This is the whole of what he means by "*proper* ſcriptural authority." This is the ground on which, while he ſpeaks of the ſacred writers as *fallible*, he nevertheleſs maintains the infallibility of their teſtimony concerning the perſon of Chriſt. He does not pretend to ſay the apoſtles were inſpired in that article, though not in others, but merely that this was a caſe in which, by the mere exerciſe of their ſenſes, they were competent to decide, and even certain of deciding right. Whether theſe notions

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of *proper* ſcriptural authority will accord with the foregoing *profeſſions*, I leave you to judge; as alſo, if Dr. Prieſtley's views be right, whether the ſacred writers, profeſſing what they did, could be "men of the greateſt probity."

You will obſerve further, that the fallibility which Dr. Prieſtley imputes to the ſacred writers, as being *men*, muſt reſt upon this principle; That it is impoſſible for God himſelf ſo to inſpire a *man* as to preſerve him from error, without deſtroying his nature; and as he conſiders Chriſt as a mere *man*, perhaps it is on this principle that he maintains him to be "fallible and peccable." Yet he has never been able to produce one example in which he has actually failed. But it ſhould ſeem very extraordinary for a fallible and peccable man to go through the world in ſuch a manner that his worſt enemies could not convict him of a ſingle failure, or accuſe him of any ſin. If this matter be capable of proof, let Dr. Prieſtley prove it. Though the Jews declined the challenge, yet it is poſſible he may poſſeſs ſufficient "magnanimity" to accept it*.

Farther, You will obſerve that the *infallibility* which Dr. Prieſtley aſcribes to the apoſtolic teſti-

* When Dr. Prieſtley charged the Moſaic hiſtory of the creation and fall of man with being a *lame account*, it was imputed to his *magnanimity*.

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mony concerning the perſon of Chriſt implies that every hiſtorian is infallible in ſimilar circumſtances. His reaſoning ſuppoſes that if a ſenſible and upright hiſtorian have the proper means of information, and pay attention to his ſubject, he is infallible; but is this a fact? It certainly has not been uſual for us to conſider hiſtorians in this light. We commonly ſuppoſe that amidſt the moſt ample means of information, and the greateſt attention, that uninſpired men, (who all have their prejudices and their imperfections) are ever known to pay to a ſubject, they are liable to miſtake. Dr. Prieſtley has written a treatiſe in which he has declared for the doctrine of *Materialiſm*, and I ſuppoſe he would be thought to have paid attention to it, and to have poſſeſſed the means of information as far as the nature of the ſubject will admit; yet I imagine he does not pretend in that article to infallibility.

If it be objected that the nature of the ſubjects is different, and that the apoſtles were capable of arriving at a greater degree of certainty concerning the perſon of Chriſt, than Dr. Prieſtley could obtain on the ſubject of materialiſm: I anſwer, this appears to be more eaſily aſſerted than proved. Dr. Prieſtley indeed tells us, "They were as "capable of judging whether he was a *man*, as "whether John the baptiſt was one." This is very true; and if the queſtion were, *Whether he*

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was a man? it might be to the purpoſe. But at this time of day, however ſome of the humble followers of Dr. Prieſtley may amuſe themſelves in circulating ſmall pamphlets, proving that Jeſus Chriſt was a man, and that with a view to convert the Trinitarians; yet he himſelf cannot be inſenſible that a materialiſt might with juſt as much propriety gravely go about to prove that men have material bodies! Suppoſing Chriſt to have been merely a man, this was a matter that could not be viſible to the eyes of the apoſtles. How could they judge by his exterior appearance whether he was merely a man, or both God and man? The perſonages that appeared to Abraham, to Lot, and to Jacob are called *men*, nor was there any thing, that we know of in their exterior appearance different from other men; yet it does not follow from thence that they were merely human. God in the above inſtances aſſumed the appearance of a man, and how could the diſciples be certain that all this might not be preparatory to his becoming really incarnate? It is true our Lord might have *told them* that he was merely a man, and in that caſe, they might have been ſaid to be *certain* of it; but if ſo, it was either in ſome private inſtructions, or elſe in the words which they have recorded in their writings. We cannot ſay it was impoſſible for the apoſtles to miſtake, reſpecting the perſon of Chriſt, owing to their *private inſtructions*; becauſe that would be building upon a foundation of which we are confeſſedly ignorant;

ignorant; neither can we affirm it on account of any of thoſe words of Chriſt to his diſciples which are *recorded*, for we have thoſe words as well as they; and it might as well be ſaid of us as of them, that "It is impoſſible for us to be under any miſtake upon the ſubject." We might as well therefore allow what Dr. Prieſtley ſays to be infallible on the queſtion whether men have ſouls, or not, as what the apoſtles ſay (if we give up their inſpiration) on the queſtion whether Chriſt was divine, or not; for the one is as much an object of the ſenſes as the other.

I cannot conceive of any foundation for the above aſſertion, unleſs it be upon the ſuppoſition of an union of the divine and human natures being *in itſelf impoſſible*; then indeed, if we ſuppoſe the apoſtles knew it to be ſo, by knowing him to be a man, they muſt have known him to be a *mere* man. But if an union of the divine and human natures be in itſelf impoſſible, that impoſſibility might as well appear to Dr. Prieſtley as to the apoſtles, if they were uninſpired; and he might as well maintain the infallibility of his own notions on the perſon of Chriſt as of their's.

In fine, Let Dr. Prieſtley view the ſubject in what light he will, if he deny the divine inſpiration of the apoſtles he will never be able to main-

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tain their infallibility on any ground but what would equally infer his own.

When Mr. Burn charges Dr. Prieſtley with denying the infallibility of the apoſtolic teſtimony, he principally founds his charge on what the Doctor had written in a miſcellaneous work called *The Theological Repoſitory*; in which he maintained, that "Some texts of the Old Teſtament had been improperly quoted by writers in the new," who, it ſeems were ſometimes "miſled by jewiſh prejudices." Lett. I. II. to Mr. Burn. Mr. Burn inferred, that if they were miſled in their application of one text, they were *liable* to the ſame thing in others; and that if ſo, we could have no ſecurity whatever for their proper application of any paſſage, or of any thing like *infallibility* attending their teſtimony. One would think this is not the moſt inconcluſive mode of reaſoning that ever was adopted; and how does Dr. Prieſtley refute it? He replies "It does not follow that becauſe I ſuppoſe "the apoſtles to have been fallible in *ſome* things, "that they were therefore fallible in all." He contends that he always conſidered them as infallible, *in what reſpects the perſon of Chriſt*, as a proof of which he alleges his having always "appealed "to their teſtimony, as being willing to be de-"cided by it." And yet we generally ſuppoſe a a ſingle failure proves a writer fallible as really as a thouſand; and as to his appealing to their teſti-

mony, and being willing to be decided by it, we generally appeal to the beſt evidence we can obtain, and muſt be decided by it; but this does not prove that we conſider that evidence as infallible. Dr. Prieſtley has appealed to the *Fathers*, yet he will hardly pretend that their teſtimony is infallible, or that they were incapable of contradicting themſelves, or one another, even in thoſe matters concerning which the appeal is made. If he will however, he muſt ſuppoſe them to have differed very widely from writers of a later date. Where is the hiſtorian who has written upon the opinions or characters, of a body of men, even of thoſe of his own times, but who is liable and likely, in ſome particulars, to be contradicted by other hiſtorians, and that of the ſame period, and equally reſpectable*?

To be ſure, if Dr. Prieſtley thinks proper to declare that he believes the apoſtles, uninſpired as they were, to have been infallible when they applied old teſtament paſſages *to the perſon of Chriſt*, and that notwithſtanding their being fallible, and miſled by jewiſh prejudices in their application of paſſages on other ſubjects, nobody has a right to ſay he does not. Thus much may be ſaid however, that he will find it no very eaſy taſk to prove himſelf in

* See this truth more fully illuſtrated in a *Letter of Dr. Edward Williams to Dr. Prieſtley*, at the end of his *Abridgement of Owen on the Hebrews*.

this matter a *rational chriſtian*. It will require no ſmall degree of labour to convince people in general, if the apoſtles are to be conſidered as uninſpired, and were actually miſled by jewiſh prejudices in their application of ſome old teſtament paſſages, that we can have any ſecurity for their not being the ſame in others.

Mr. Burn, with a view to illuſtrate his argument, ſuppoſed an example, viz. the application of Pſal. xlv. 6. to Chriſt, in Heb. i. 8. He obſerves, that according to the foregoing hypotheſis, "there is "no dependence to be placed upon the argument, "becauſe the apoſtle in his application of this ſcrip- "ture to the Meſſiah *was miſled by a prejudice com-* "*mon among the jews reſpecting this and other paſ-* "*ſages in the old teſtament.*" Mr. Burn does not mean to ſay that Dr. Prieſtley *had in this manner actually rejected the argument from* Heb. i. 8. but barely that according to his hypotheſis, *he might do ſo.* He preſerves the *principle* of his opponent's objection, as he himſelf expreſſes it, but does not mean to aſſert that he had applied that principle to this particular paſſage. And how does Dr. Prieſtley reply to this? why, by alleging that he *had not* applied the above principle to the paſſage in queſtion, but had given it a ſenſe which allowed the propriety of it's being applied to Chriſt—that is, he had not made that uſe of a principle which might be made of it, and which no one aſſerted he

had made of it! Dr. Prieſtley is doubtleſs poſſeſſed of great abilities, and has had large experience in controverſial writing, to what a ſituation then muſt he have been reduced to have recourſe to ſuch an anſwer as the above!

The queſtion between Mr. Burn and Dr. Prieſtley, if I underſtand it, is not Whether the latter appealed to the ſcriptures for the truth of his opinions; but whether his ſuppoſing the ſacred writers in ſome caſes to apply ſcripture improperly, does not render that appeal inconſiſtent; not whether he had allowed the propriety of the apoſtles quoting the ſixth verſe of the forty fifth Pſalm, and applying it in the firſt chapter of the Hebrews to Chriſt, but whether upon the principle of the ſacred writers being liable to make, and having actually made ſome improper quotations, he *might not* have diſallowed it; not whether the apoſtles did actually fail in this or that particular ſubject, but whether if they failed in ſome inſtances they were not *liable* to fail in others, and whether any dependence could be placed on their deciſions; not whether the apoſtles teſtified *things which they had ſeen and heard from the beginning*, but whether their *infallibility* can be ſupported merely upon that ground, without ſuppoſing that the Holy Spirit aſſiſted their memories, guided their judgments, and ſuperintended their productions. If the reader of that controverſy keep the above points

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in view, he will eaſily perceive the futility of a great many of Dr. Prieſtley's anſwers, notwithſtanding all his poſitivity and triumph, and his proceeding to admoniſh Mr. Burn to repentance.

Dr. Prieſtley in his ſixth Letter to Mr. Burn denies that he makes *the reaſon of the individual the ſole umpire in matters of faith*; but if the ſacred writers "in ſome things which they advanced were "fallible and miſled by prejudice," what dependence can be placed upon them? Whether the reaſon of the individual be a proper umpire in matters of faith, or not, the writings of the apoſtles on the foregoing hypotheſis, can make no ſuch pretence. Dr. Prieſtley may allege that we muſt diſtinguiſh between thoſe things to which the apoſtles had not given much attention, and other things to which they had; thoſe in which they were prejudiced, and others in which they were unprejudiced; thoſe concerning which they had not the means of exact information, and others of a different deſcription; but can he himſelf at this diſtance of time, or even if he had been contemporary with them, always tell what thoſe caſes are? How, in many inſtances at leaſt, can he judge with any certainty of the degree of attention which they gave to things, of the prejudiced or unprejudiced ſtate of their minds, or of the means of information which they poſſeſſed? Or if *he* could decide with ſatisfaction to himſelf on theſe matters, how are the bulk of mankind to judge,

judge, who are not poſſeſſed of his powers and opportunities, but who are equally intereſted in the affair with himſelf? Are they implicitly to rely on his opinion; or to ſupplicate heaven for a new revelation to point out the defects and errors of the old one? In ſhort, let Dr. Prieſtley profeſs what regard he may for the ſcriptures, if what he advances be true, *they* can be no proper teſt of truth; and if the reaſon of the individual be not the umpire, and the ſole umpire of theſe matters, there can be no umpire at all, but all muſt be left in gloomy doubt, and dreadful uncertainty*.

The generality of Socinian writers, as well as Dr. Prieſtley, write degradingly of our only rule of faith. The ſcriptures profeſs to be *profitable for* DOCTRINE, and to be *able to make men wiſe unto ſalvation. The teſtimony of the Lord is* ſaid to be *ſure, making wiſe the ſimple.* And thoſe who have made it their ſtudy have profeſſed to have obtained *more underſtanding than all their teachers.* But Mr. LINDSEY conſiders the ſcriptures as unadapted to promote any high perfection in knowlege, and that they are left in obſcurity, with deſign to afford an occaſion of charity, candor, and forbear-

* The reader will obſerve that the foregoing remarks on the controverſy between Mr. Burn and Dr. Prieſtley have nothing to do with that part of it which relates to the Riots at Birmingham, but merely with that on *the perſon of Chriſt.*

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ance. Speaking of the doctrine of the perſon of Chriſt, "Surely it muſt be owned, he ſays, to have "been left in ſome obſcurity in the ſcriptures them- "ſelves, which might miſlead readers full of hea- "then prejudices, (otherwiſe ſo many men wiſe "and good would not have differed, and ſtill con- "tinue to differ concerning it) and ſo left it ſhould "ſeem on purpoſe to whet human induſtry, and the "ſpirit of enquiry into the things of God, to give "ſcope for the exerciſe of men's charity and mu- "tual forbearance of one another, and to be one "great means of cultivating the moral diſpoſiti- "ons, which is plainly the deſign of the Holy "Spirit of God in the chriſtian revelation, and "not any high perfection in knowlege which ſo "few can attain." Apol. Ch. II.

On this extraordinary paſſage one might enquire, Firſt, If the ſcriptures have left the ſubject in obſcurity, why might not the miſtake of thoſe who hold with the divinity of Chriſt (ſuppoſing them to be miſtaken) have been accounted for, without alleging as Mr Lindſey elſewhere does, that "They "are to be conſidered and pitied as being under a "debility of mind in this reſpect however ſenſible "and rational in others?" If wiſe and good men have differed upon the ſubject in all ages, and that owing to the obſcurity with which it is inveloped in the ſcriptures themſelves, why this inſulting language? Is it any diſgrace to a perſon not to ſee that

that clearly in the ſcriptures, which is not clearly there to be ſeen?

Secondly, If the ſcriptures have indeed left the ſubject in obſcurity, how came Mr. Lindſey to be ſo clear and decided upon it? The "high perfection of knowlege" which he poſſeſſes muſt doubtleſs have been acquired from ſome *other quarter*, ſeeing it made no part of the deſign of the Holy Spirit of God in the chriſtian revelation; and if ſo, we have no farther diſpute with him, as, in what reſpects religion, we do not aſpire to be wiſe above what is written.

Thirdly, Let it be conſidered whether the principle on which Mr. Lindſey propoſes the exerciſe of charity and mutual forbearance, do not caſt a a heavy reflection upon the character of God. The ſcriptures, in what relates to the perſon of Chriſt (a ſubject on which Dr. Prieſtley allows the writers to have been *infallible*) are left obſcure, ſo obſcure, as to miſlead readers full of heathen prejudices, yea, and with the very deſign of miſleading them. God himſelf it ſeems deſigned that they ſhould ſtumble on in ignorance, error and diſagreement, till at laſt, wearied with their fate, and finding themſelves united in one common calamity, they might become friends. But what is this friendſhip? Is it not at the expence of him who is ſuppoſed to have ſpread their way with ſnares, or which is the ſame thing,

thing, with misleading obscurity? Is it any other than the *Friendship of the world, which is enmity with God?*

In perfect harmony with Mr. Lindsey is what is advanced by a MONTHLY REVIEWER. "The "nature and design of the scripture, he says, is "not to settle disputed theories, nor to decide up- "on speculative controverted questions, even *in* "*religion and morality.*—The Scriptures, if we "understand any thing of them, are intended not "so much to make us wiser, as to make us bet- "ter; not to solve the doubts, but rather to make "us obey the dictates of our consciences*." The Holy Scriptures were never designed then to be a *rule* of faith or practice; but merely a *stimulative.* In matters of speculation, (as all disputed subjects will be termed whether doctrinal or practical) they have no authority it seems to decide any question. *What saith the Scriptures*, therefore, would now be an impertinent question. You are to find out what is truth, and what is righteousness, by your reason, and your conscience; and when you have obtained a system of religion and morality to your mind, Scripture is to furnish you with motives to reduce it to practice.—If this be true, to what purpose are all appeals to the Scriptures on contro-

* Rev. of Bishop *Horsley's* Sermon, Mar. 1793. Vol. X. p. 357.

verted ſubjects, and why do Socinians pretend to appeal to them? Why do they not honeſtly acknowlege that they did not learn their religion from thence, and therefore refuſe to have it tried at that bar? This would ſave much labour. To what purpoſe do they object to particular paſſages as *interpolations*, or *miſtranſlations*, or the like, when the whole, be it ever ſo pure, has nothing at all to do in the deciſion of our controverſies. We uſed to ſpeak of Conſcience having but *one maſter, even Chriſt*; but now, it ſeems conſcience is it's own maſter, and Jeſus Chriſt does not pretend to dictate to it, but merely to aſſiſt in the execution of it's deciſions.

Mr. BELSHAM carries the matter ſtill farther. This Gentleman, not ſatisfied, it ſeems, with diſclaiming an implicit confidence in Holy Scripture, pretends to find *authority in the ſcriptures themſelves for ſo doing!* "The Bereans, he ſays, are "commended for not taking the word even of an "apoſtle, but examining the ſcriptures for them"ſelves, whether the doctrine which they heard "was true, and whether St. Paul's reaſoning "was juſt." Serm. p. 39. I do not recollect that the Bereans were commended for not taking the word of an apoſtle, but for not rejecting it without examination, as the Jews did at Theſſalonica. But granting it were otherwiſe, their ſituation was different from our's; they had not had opportunity

opportunity of obtaining evidence that the apoſtles were divinely inſpired, or that the goſpel which they preached was a meſſage from God. This ſurely is a circumſtance of importance; there is a great difference between their entertaining ſome doubt of the truth of the goſpel till they had fully examined it's evidences, and our ſtill continuing to doubt of it's particular doctrines, and reaſonings, even though we allow it to be a meſſage from God.—To this may be added, that in order to obtain evidence, the Bereans *ſearched the Scriptures*. By comparing the facts which Paul teſtified with the prophecies which went before, and the doctrines which he preached with thoſe of the old teſtament, they would judge whether his meſſage was of God, or not. There is a great difference between the criterion of the Bereans, and that of the Socinians. The ſcriptures of the old teſtament were the allowed ſtandard of the former, and they employed their reaſon to find out their meaning, and agreement with new teſtament facts; but the authority and agreement of the old and new teſtaments will not ſatisfy the latter, unleſs what they contain agree alſo with their pre-conceived notions of what is fit and reaſonable. The one tried what, for aught they at that time knew, were mere private reaſonings by the Scriptures; but the other try the Scriptures by their own private reaſonings.—Finally, If propoſing a doctrine for examination prove the propoſer liable to falſe or unjuſt reaſoning, it will

follow that the reaſoning of Chriſt might be falſe or unjuſt, ſeeing he appealed to the ſcriptures as well as his apoſtles, and deſired his hearers to *ſearch* them. It will alſo follow, that all the great *facts* of chriſtianity, as well as the reaſonings of Chriſt and his apoſtles, were liable to be detected of falſhood; for theſe were as conſtantly ſubmitted to examination as the other. *Theſe things*, ſaid they, *were not done in a corner*. Nay, it muſt follow that God himſelf is liable to be in a wrong cauſe, ſeeing he frequently appeals to men's judgments and conſciences—*And now, O inhabitants of Jeruſalem, and men of Judah, judge I pray you betwixt me and my vineyard!* The inhabitants of Jeruſalem and men of Judah were exhorted and even entreated, it may be ſaid, not to take matters upon truſt; but examine for themſelves whether the conduct of Jehovah was juſt, and whether any more ought to have been done for his vineyard that was not done!

But, far as our Engliſh Socinians have gone in theſe things, they do not ſeem to have exceeded, nor hardly equalled, thoſe of the ſame denomination in other countries. Theſe appear to have made great advances indeed towards infidelity. Mr. *Blackwall* makes mention of two whoſe language conveys an idea of uncommon diſreſpect to the ſacred writings. GEORGE ENGEDIN, ſpeaking of the writings of John, ſays, "If a conciſe, abrupt obſcurity

" ſcurity, inconſiſtent with itſelf, and made up " of allegories, is to be called ſublimity of ſpeech, " I own *John* to be ſublime: for there is ſcarce " one diſcourſe of Chriſt which is not altogether " allegorical, and very hard to be underſtood." GAGNEIUS, another writer of the ſame ſpirit, ſays, " I ſhall not a little glory if I ſhall be found to " give ſome light to *Paul's* darkneſs; a darkneſs " as ſome think induſtriouſly affected."—'Let 'any of the followers of theſe worthy interpreters 'of the goſpel, and champions of chriſtianity, 'adds Mr. Blackwall by way of reflection, ſpeak 'worſe if they can of the ambiguous oracles of 'the father of lies. Theſe fair-dealing Gentle-'men firſt diſguiſe the ſacred writers, and turn 'them into a harſh allegory;—and then charge 'them with that obſcurity and inconſiſtency which 'is plainly conſequent upon that ſenſe which their '—interpretations force upon them. They outrage 'the divine writers in a double capacity: firſt they 'debaſe their ſenſe as theologues and commentators, 'and then carp at, and vilify their language as 'grammarians and critics.' Sacred Claſſicks, P. II. Ch. V.

STEINBART, SEMLER, and other foreign Socinians, of later date, write in a very ſimilar ſtrain. The *former*, ſpeaking of the narrations of facts contained in the new teſtament, ſays, " Theſe " narrations true, or falſe, are only ſuited for ig-

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" norant, uncultivated minds, who cannot enter " into the evidence of natural religion." The ſame writer adds, " Moſes, according to the childiſh " conceptions of the jews in his days, paints God " as agitated by violent affections, partial to one " people, and hating all other nations."—The *latter* in a note on 2 Pet. i. 2.—*The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt*, ſays, " Peter ſpeaks there according to the concep- " tion of the Jews, and that the prophets may " have delivered the offspring of their own brains " as divine revelations*."

Socinian writers ſometimes profeſs great reſpect for the Holy Scriptures, and moſt, if not all of them would have it thought that they conſider their teſtimony as being in their favour; but if ſo, why all theſe pains to depreciate them? We know who they are who not only undermine their general credit, but are obliged on almoſt every occaſion to have recourſe to *interpolation*, or *miſtranſlation*; who are driven to diſown the apoſtolic *reaſonings* as a proper teſt of religious ſentiment, and to hold them as the mere private opinions of men, no way deciſive as to what is truth. But is it uſual in any cauſe for perſons to endeavour to ſet aſide thoſe

* Dr. Erſkine's *Sketches and Hints* of Church Hiſtory, No. III. p. 95, 71.

witneſſes

witneſſes, and invalidate that teſtimony which they conſider at the ſame time as being in their favour? This is a queſtion which it does not require much critical ſkill to decide.

When Socinian writers have mangled and altered the tranſlation to their mind, informing us that ſuch a term *may* be rendered ſo, and ſuch a paſſage ſhould be pointed ſo—and ſo on—they ſeem to expect that their opponents ſhould quote the ſcriptures accordingly, and if they do not, are very liberal in inſinuating that their deſign is to impoſe upon the vulgar. But though it be admitted that every tranſlation muſt needs have it's imperfections, and that thoſe imperfections ought to be corrected by fair and impartial criticiſm; yet where alterations are made by thoſe who have an end to anſwer by them, they ought always to be ſuſpected, and will be ſo by thinking and impartial people.

If we muſt quote particular paſſages of ſcripture after the manner in which our adverſaries tranſlate them, we muſt alſo avoid quoting all thoſe which they object to as interpolations. Nor ſhall we ſtop here; we muſt leave out whole chapters, if not whole books, on certain occaſions. We muſt never refer to the apoſtolic *reaſonings*, but conſider that they were ſubject to be miſled by jewiſh prejudices; nor even to hiſtorical facts, unleſs we can ſatisfy ourſelves that the hiſtorians, independent of their

their being divinely inſpired, were poſſeſſed of ſufficient means of information. In ſhort, if we muſt never quote ſcripture, except according to the rules impoſed upon us by ſocinian writers, we muſt not quote it at all; not at leaſt till they ſhall have indulged us with a bible of their own that ſhall leave out every thing on which we are to place no dependence. A publication of this ſort would doubtleſs be an acceptable preſent to the chriſtian world, would be compriſed in a *very ſmall compaſs*, and be of infinite ſervice in cutting ſhort a great deal of unneceſſary controverſy, into which, for want of ſuch a criterion, we ſhall always be in danger of wandering.

Dr. Prieſtley, in his *Animadverſions on Mr. Gibbon's Hiſtory*, takes notice of what is *implied* by that gentleman's endeavouring to leſſen the number and validity of the early martyrdoms; namely, a conſciouſneſs that they afforded an argument againſt him. "Mr. Gibbon, ſays the Doctor, appears to have been ſufficiently ſenſible of "the value of ſuch a teſtimony to the truth of the "goſpel hiſtory as is furniſhed by the early martyrdoms, and therefore he takes great pains to "diminiſh their number; and when the facts cannot be denied, he endeavours to exhibit them "in the moſt unfavourable light." Lett to a P. U. P. II p. 227. Judge, chriſtian brethren, whether this picture does not bear too near a reſemblance to the conduct

conduct of Dr. Prieſtley, and other Socinian writers, reſpecting the Holy Scriptures.

I have heard of perſons who, when engaging in a law-ſuit, and fearing leſt certain individuals ſhould appear in evidence againſt them, have ſo contrived matters as to *ſue the witneſſes*, and ſo by making them parties in the conteſt, have diſqualified them for bearing teſtimony. And what elſe is the conduct of Dr. Prieſtley with reſpect to thoſe ſcripture paſſages which ſpeak of Chriſt as GOD in the new teſtament? We read there that *The Word that was made fleſh, and dwelt among us,* WAS GOD—*Thomas exclaimed My Lord, and my* GOD—*Of whom, as concerning the fleſh, Chriſt came, who is over all,* GOD *bleſſed for ever—Unto the Son he ſaith, thy throne,* O GOD, *is for ever and ever—Feed the church of* GOD *which he hath purchaſed with his own blood—Hereby perceive we the love of* GOD, *becauſe he laid down his life for us**. But Dr. Prieſtley aſſerts that "In no ſenſe whatever, "not even in the loweſt of all, is Chriſt ſo much "as called *God* in all the new teſtament." Let. I. to Mr. Burn. The method taken by this writer to enable himſelf to hazard ſuch an aſſertion without being ſubject to the charge of downright falſhood, could be no other than that of laying a kind

* John i. 1, 14.—xx. 28. Rom. ix. 5. Heb. i. 8. Acts xx. 28. 1 John iii. 16.

kind of arreſt upon the foregoing paſſages, with others, as being either interpolations, or miſtranſlations, or ſomething that ſhall anſwer the ſame end, and by theſe means impoſing ſilence upon them, as to the ſubject in diſpute. To be ſure, we may go on, killing one ſcripture teſtimony, and ſtoning another, till at length it will become an eaſy thing to aſſert that there is never an inſtance in all the new teſtament in which our opinions are confronted, but to what does it all amount? When we are told that "Chriſt is never ſo much as called "*God* in the new teſtament," the queſtion is, whether we are to underſtand it of the new teſtament as it was left by the ſacred writers, or as corrected, amended, curtailed, and interpreted by a ſet of controverſiſts with a view to make it accord with a favourite ſyſtem?

I am, &c.

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LETTER XIII.

On the tendency of the different Syſtems to promote Happineſs.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

NOTHING is more common with our opponents than to repreſent the Calviniſtic ſyſtem as gloomy, as leading to melancholy and miſery. Our ideas of God, of ſin, and of future puniſhment, they ſay, muſt neceſſarily depreſs our minds. Dr. Prieſtley, as we have ſeen already, reckons unitarians "more cheerful" than trinitarians. Nor is this all, It has even been aſſerted that the tendency of our principles is to promote "Moral turpitude, "melancholy and deſpair; and that the ſuicide "practiſed amongſt the middling and lower ranks "is frequently to be traced to this doctrine*." This is certainly carrying matters to a great height. It might be worth while however for thoſe who advance ſuch things as theſe to make good what they affirm, if they are able; till that is done, candor itſelf muſt conſider their bold aſſertions as the mere effuſions of malignity and ſlander.

* See *Crit. Rev.* for Sep. 1787 On *Memoirs of Gabriel D'Anville*.

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It is ſome conſolation that what is objected to us by Socinians, is objected to *religion itſelf* by unbelievers. Lord *Shaftſbury* obſerves, "There is "a melancholy which accompanies all enthuſi-"aſm;" which, in his lips, is only another name for chriſtianity. To the ſame purpoſe Mr. *Hume* obſerves, "There is a gloom and melancholy re-"markable in all devout people." If theſe writers had formed a compariſon between deiſts and atheiſts on the one ſide, and devout chriſtians on the other, they would have ſaid of the former as Dr. Prieſtley hath ſaid of unitarians, "They are more cheerful, "and more happy."

It is granted that the ſyſtem we imbibe has nothing in it adapted to promote the happineſs of thoſe who perſiſt in enmity againſt God, and in a rejection of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt as the only way of ſalvation. While men are at war with God we know of no one promiſe of the goſpel that is adapted to make them happy. This perhaps with ſome may be a conſiderable ground of objection to our views of things; but then ſuch objection muſt equally ſtand againſt the ſcriptures themſelves, ſince their language to ungodly men is, *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep.* All the prophets and miniſters of the word had it in commiſſion to *Say to the wicked it ſhall be ill with him.* This, with us, is one conſiderable objection againſt the doctrine of *the final ſalvation of all men*; a doctrine much circulated

circulated of late, and generally embraced by Socinian writers. Suppoſing it were a truth, it muſt be of ſuch a kind as is adapted to comfort mankind *in ſin*. It is good news, but it is to the impenitent and unbelieving, even thoſe who live and die ſuch; which is a circumſtance ſo ſingular that I queſtion if any thing can be found in the bible to reſemble it. If our views of things be but adapted to encourage ſinners, to return to God by Jeſus Chriſt; if they afford ſtrong conſolation to thoſe who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope ſet before them; and if ſobriety, righteouſneſs, and godlineſs here meet with the moſt powerful motives, this is all that the ſcriptures themſelves propoſe. Further,

It is granted that our ſyſtem is not adapted to promote that kind of cheerfulneſs and happineſs to which men in general are greatly addicted; namely, that which conſiſts in *ſelf-deceit*, and *levity of ſpirit*. There is a kind of cheerfulneſs like that of a tradeſman who avoids looking into his accounts leſt they ſhould diſturb his peace, and render him unhappy. This indeed is the cheerfulneſs of a great part of mankind; they ſhun the light leſt it ſhould diſturb their repoſe, and interrupt their preſent purſuits. They try to perſuade themſelves that *they* ſhall have peace, though they add drunkenneſs to thirſt; and there are not wanting preachers who afford them aſſiſtance in the dangerous deluſion!

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The doctrines of human depravity, of ſinners being under the curſe of the law, and of their expoſedneſs to everlaſting puniſhment, are the doctrines which are ſuppoſed to lead us to melancholy; and we may fairly conclude that the *oppoſites* to theſe doctrines are at the bottom of the cheerfulneſs of which our opponents boaſt. Inſtead of conſidering mankind as loſt ſinners, expoſed to everlaſting deſtruction, they love to repreſent them ſimply as creatures, as the children of God, and to ſuppoſe that having in general more virtue than vice, they have nothing to fear; or if in a few inſtances it be otherwiſe, ſtill they have no reaſon to be afraid of *endleſs* puniſhment. Theſe things, to be ſure, make people cheerful, but then it is with the cheerfulneſs of a wicked man. It is juſt as wicked men would have it. It is no wonder that perſons of "No religion, and who lean to a life "of diſſipation, ſhould be the firſt to embrace "theſe principles." They are ſuch as muſt needs ſuit them; eſpecially if we add to them what Dr. Prieſtley inculcates in his Sermon on the death of Mr. Robinſon, *that it is not neceſſary to dwell in our thoughts upon death and futurity, leſt it ſhould interrupt the buſineſs of life, and cauſe us to live in perpetual bondage.* We hope it is no diſparagement of the Calviniſtic doctrine that it diſclaims the promoting of all ſuch cheerfulneſs as this. That cheerfulneſs which is damped by thoughts of death and futurity, at beſt is mere natural joy; it has no virtue

virtue in it; and in many caſes it is poſitively vicious, and founded in ſelf-deception. It is nothing better than *The laughter of a fool*; it may blaze awhile in the boſoms of the diſſipated and the ſecure; but if the ſinner be once awakened to juſt reflection, it will expire *like the crackling of thorns under a pot.*

There is alſo a kind of happineſs which ſome perſons enjoy, in treating the moſt ſerious and important ſubjects with *levity*, making them the ſubjects of jeſt, and trying their ſkill in diſputing upon them; which is frequently called pleaſantry, good nature, and the like. A cheerfulneſs of this kind in *Oliver Cromwell* is praiſed by Mr Lindſey, and repreſented as an excellency "of which the gloomy "bigot is utterly incapable. Apol. Ch. II. Pleaſantry, on ſome occaſions, and to a certain degree, is natural, and allowable; but if ſporting with ſacred things muſt go by that name, let me be called "a gloomy bigot" rather than indulge it.

Once more, It is allowed that the ſyſtem we embrace has a tendency on various occaſions to promote *ſorrow of heart.* Our notions of the evil of ſin exceed thoſe of our opponents; while they reject the doctrine of atonement by the croſs of Chriſt, they have not that glaſs to diſcern it's malignity which others have. There are times in which we remember Calvary, and weep on account

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of that for which our Redeemer died But ſo far are we from conſidering this as our infelicity, that for weeping in this manner once, we could wiſh to do ſo a thouſand times. There is a pleaſure in the very pains of godly ſorrow of which the light-minded ſpeculatiſt is utterly incapable. The tears of her that wept, and waſhed her Saviour's feet, afforded abundantly greater ſatisfaction than the unfeeling calm of the Phariſee, who ſtood by making his ill-natured reflections upon her conduct.

If our views of things have no tendency to promote ſolid, holy, heavenly joy, joy that fits true chriſtians for the proper buſineſs of this world, and the bleſſedneſs of that to come, we will acknowlege it a ſtrong preſumption againſt them; and if, on the other hand, they can be proved to poſſeſs ſuch a tendency, and that in a much greater degree than the oppoſite ſcheme, it will be a conſiderable argument in their favour. Let us examine this matter a little cloſer.

The utmoſt happineſs to which the Socinian ſcheme pretends, conſiſts in *calmneſs of mind*, like that of a philoſopher contemplating the works of creation. The friends of that ſcheme conceive of man as a good kind of being, ſuppoſe there is a greater proportion of virtue in the world than vice, and that things upon the whole are getting better ſtill, and ſo tending to happineſs. They ſuppoſe there

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is little or no breach between God and men, nothing but what may be made up by repentance, a repentance without much pain of mind*, and without any atoning Saviour, that God being the benevolent father of his rational offspring, will not be very ſtrict to mark iniquity, and that as his benevolence is infinite, all will be well at laſt; *as with the good ſo with the ſinner, with him that ſweareth as with him that feareth an oath.* This makes them calm and ſerene, and enables them to purſue the ſtudies of philoſophy, or the avocations of life, with compoſure. This appears to be the ſummit of their happineſs; yea, and muſt be the ſummit of the happineſs of all others if they wiſh to eſcape their cenſure, for if any one pretend to happineſs of a ſuperior kind they will inſtantly reproach him as an enthuſiaſt. A writer in the *Monthly Review* obſerves concerning the late *Preſident Edwards*, that "From the account given of him he appears to "have been a very reputable good and pious man, "according to *his views and feelings* in religious "matters; which thoſe of different ſentiments and "cooler ſenſations will not fail to conſider as all "wild *extaſy*, *rapture*, and *enthuſiaſm*†."

The tendency of any ſyſtem to promote *calmneſs*,

* Such a repentance is pleaded for by Mr. *Jardine* in his Letter to Mr. *Bogue*. † *Rev. of Edwards's Hiſt. of Redemption*, Vol. LXXX. Art. 68.

is nothing at all in it's favour, any further than ſuch calmneſs can be proved to be virtuous. But this muſt be determined by the ſituation in which we ſtand. We ought to be affected according to our ſituation. If there be no breach indeed between God and men, if all be right on our part as well as his, and juſt as it ſhould be, then it becomes us to be calm and thankful; but if it be otherwiſe, it becomes us to feel accordingly. If we have offended God, we ought to bewail our tranſgreſſions, and be ſorry for our ſin; and if the offence be great, we ought to be deeply affected with it. It would be thought very improper for a convict a little before the time appointed for his execution, inſtead of cheriſhing proper reflections on the magnitude of his offence, and ſueing for the mercy of his offended Sovereign, to be employed in ſpeculating upon his benevolence, till he had really worked himſelf into a perſuaſion that no ſerious apprehenſions were to be entertained, either concerning himſelf or any of his fellow convicts. Such a perſon might enjoy a much greater degree of *calmneſs* than his companions; but conſiderate people would not admire his mode of thinking, or envy his imaginary felicity.

Calmneſs and ſerenity of mind *may* ariſe from ignorance of ourſelves, and from the want of a principle of true religion. While Paul was ignorant of his true character, he was calm and eaſy, or as he expreſſes it, *alive without the law*; but

when

when the commandment came in its ſpirituality and authority, *ſin revived and he died.* The phariſee who was *whole* in his own eſteem, and needed no phyſician, was abundantly more calm than the publican, who ſmote upon his breaſt, and cried, *God be merciful to me a ſinner!* While any man is deſtitute of a principle of true religion, the ſtrong man armed keepeth the houſe, and the goods are in *peace*; and while things are thus he will be a ſtranger to all thoſe holy mournings which abound in the pſalms of David, and to thoſe inward conflicts between *fleſh and ſpirit* deſcribed in the writings of Paul. And knowing nothing of ſuch things himſelf, he will be apt to think meanly of thoſe who do; to deride them as enthuſiaſts, to reproach them with gloomineſs, and to boaſt of his own inſenſibility, under the names of calmneſs and cheerfulneſs. But further,

Suppoſing the calmneſs and cheerfulneſs of mind of which our opponents boaſt, to be on the ſide of virtue; ſtill it is a cold and inſipid kind of happineſs, compared with that which is produced by the doctrine of ſalvation through the atoning blood of Chriſt. One great ſource of happineſs is *contraſt.* Dr. Prieſtley has proved, what indeed is evident from univerſal experience, "that the recollection of paſt "troubles, after a certain interval, becomes highly "pleaſureable, and is a pleaſure of a very durable "kind." * On this principle he undertakes to

* *Lett. to a Phil. Unb.* Pt. I. Let. VI.

prove

prove the infinite benevolence of the Deity, even in his ſo ordering things that a mixture of pain and ſorrow ſhould fall to the lot of man. On the ſame principle may be proved, if I miſtake not, the ſuperiority of the Calviniſtic ſyſtem to that of the Socinians, in point of promoting happineſs. The doctrines of the former, ſuppoſing them to be true, are *affecting*. It is affecting to think that man, originally pure, ſhould have fallen from the height of righteouſneſs and honour, to the depth of apoſtaſy and infamy—that he is now an enemy to God, and actually lies under his awful and juſt diſpleaſure, expoſed to everlaſting miſery—that notwithſtanding all this a ranſom is found to deliver him from going down to the pit—that God ſo loved the world as to give his only begotten Son to become a ſacrifice for ſin, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have eternal life—that the iſſue of Chriſt's death is not left at uncertainty, nor the invitations of his goſpel ſubject to univerſal rejection, but an effectual proviſion made in the great plan of redemption that he ſhall ſee of the travail of his ſoul, and be ſatisfied—that the Holy Spirit is given to renew and ſanctify a people for himſelf—that they who were under condemnation and wrath, being juſtified by faith in the righteouſneſs of Jeſus, have peace with God—aliens and out-caſts become the ſons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty—everlaſting arms are now beneath them, and everlaſting glory is before them. Theſe ſentiments,

I ſay

I ſay, ſuppoſing them to be true, are undoubtedly *affecting*. The Socinian ſyſtem, ſuppoſing it were true, compared with this, is cold, unintereſting, and inſipid.

We read of *joy and peace in believing*—of *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory*. Thoſe who imbibe the Calviniſtic doctrines of the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin, and of their own loſt and undone condition as ſinners, are prepared to imbibe the joy of the goſpel, ſuppoſing it to exhibit a great ſalvation, through the atonement of a great Saviour, to which others muſt of neceſſity be ſtrangers. The phariſees, who thought well of their character and condition, like the elder ſon in the parable, inſtead of rejoicing at the good news of ſalvation to the chief of ſinners, were diſguſted at it; and this will ever be the caſe with all who, like the phariſees, are *whole* in their own eyes, ſo whole as to think they need no phyſician.

The votaries of the Socinian ſcheme do not in general appear to feel their hearts much intereſted by it. *Voltaire* could ſay in his time, "At leaſt "hitherto, only a very ſmall number of thoſe called "Unitarians have held any religious meetings." * And though Dr. Prieſtley by his great zeal has endeavored to invigorate and reform the party, yet he

* *Additions to Gen. Hiſt.* Art. *England*, under Charles II.

admits

admits the juſtice of a common complaint amongſt them, that " their ſocieties do not flouriſh, their " members have but a ſlight attachment to them, " and eaſily deſert them, though it is never imagined, " he adds, that they deſert their principles." Vol. Serm. p. 94. All this the Doctor accounts for by allowing that their principles are not of that importance which we ſuppoſe ours to be; and that " many " of thoſe who judge ſo truly concerning the par- " ticular tenets of religion have attained to that " cool unbiaſſed temper of mind in conſequence of " becoming more indifferent to religion in general, " and to all the modes and doctrines of it." Through indifference it ſeems they come in, and through indifference they go out, and are very indifferent while there. Yet 'tis ſaid they ſtill retain their principles, and I ſuppoſe are very cheerful, and very happy; happineſs their's, conſequently, which does not intereſt the heart any more than reform the life.

Although the aforementioned writer in the *Monthly Review* inſinuates that *Preſident Edwards's* religious feelings were " all wild extaſy, rapture, and en- " thuſiaſm," yet he adds, " We cannot queſtion " the ſincerity of Mr. Edwards, who, however he " may poſſibly have impoſed on himſelf by the " warmth of his imagination, was perhaps rather " to be envied than derided for his ardours and ex- " taſies, which in themſelves were at leaſt innocent; " in which he no doubt found much delight, and

" from

" from which no creature could receive the leaſt " hurt." I Thank you, Sir, for this conceſſion. It will at leaſt ſerve to ſhew that the ſentiments and feelings which you deem wild and enthuſiaſtical may, by your own acknowlegement, be the moſt adapted to promote human happineſs; and that is all for which I at preſent contend. Preſident Edwards was far from being a perſon of that warm imagination which this writer would inſinuate. No man could be a greater enemy to real enthuſiaſm. He had a great ſhare of coolneſs of judgement, as well as of calmneſs and ſerenity of mind, even under the moſt virulent oppoſitions, and heavieſt trials; as great, and perhaps greater than any one this gentleman can produce from amongſt thoſe whom he calls men of *cool ſenſations*. But he felt ſenſibly and deeply in religion; and in ſuch feelings, our adverſaries themſelves being judges, he was to be " en- " vied, and not derided."

Why ſhould religion be the only ſubject in which we muſt not be allowed to feel? Men are praiſed for the exerciſe of ardour and even extaſy in poetry, in politics, and in the endearing connexions of ſocial life; but in religion we muſt either go on with cool indifference, or be branded as enthuſiaſts. Is it becauſe religion is of leſs importance than other things? Is eternal ſalvation of leſs conſequence than the political or domeſtic accommodations of time? It is treated by multitudes as if it were; and the

the ſpirit of Socinianiſm, ſo far as it operates, tends to keep them in countenance. Is it not a pity but thoſe who call themſelves *rational chriſtians* would act more rationally? Nothing can be more irrational, as well as injurious, than to encourage an ardor of mind after the trifles of a moment, and to diſcourage it when purſuing objects of infinitely greater magnitude.

" Paſſion is reaſon, tranſport temper here!"

The Socinian ſyſtem propoſes to exclude *myſtery* from religion, or " things in their own nature in-" comprehenſible." * But ſuch a ſcheme not only renders religion the only thing in nature void of myſtery, but diveſts it of a property eſſential to the continued communication of happineſs to an immortal creature. Our paſſions are more affected by objects which ſurpaſs our comprehenſion, than by thoſe which we fully know. It is thus with reſpect to *unhappineſs*—An unknown miſery is much more dreadful than one that is fully known. Suſpence adds to diſtreſs. If we know the worſt, the worſt is commonly over; and hence our troubles are frequently greater when feared, than when actually felt. It is the ſame with reſpect to *happineſs*. That happineſs which is felt in the purſuit of ſcience, abates in the full poſſeſſion of the object. When once a matter is fully known, we ceaſe to take that pleaſure

* *Def. of Unit. for* 1786 p. 67.

in

in it as at firſt, and long for ſomething new. It is the ſame in all other kinds of happineſs. The mind loves to ſwim in deep waters; if it touch the bottom it feels diſguſt. If the beſt were once fully known, the beſt would from thence be over. Some of the nobleſt paſſions in Paul were excited by objects incomprehenſible—*O, the depth of the riches, both of the wiſdom and knowlege of God! How unſearchable are his judgements, and his ways paſt finding out! Great is the myſtery of godlineſs: God was manifeſt in the fleſh, juſtified in the ſpirit, ſeen of angels, believed on in the world, received up into glory!* Now if things be ſo, it is eaſy to ſee that to diveſt religion of every thing incomprehenſible is to diveſt it of what is eſſential to human happineſs; and no wonder, for it is nothing leſs than to diveſt it of GOD!

The Socinian ſcheme, by rejecting the Deity and Atonement of Chriſt, rejects the very eſſence of that which ſupports and tranſports a chriſtian's heart. It was acknowleged by Mr. Hume, that "The *good*, "the *great*, the *ſublime*, and the *raviſhing*, were to "be found evidently in the principles of Theiſm." To this Dr. Prieſtley very juſtly replies, "If ſo, I "need not ſay that there muſt be ſomething *mean*, "*abject*, and *debaſing* in the principles of Atheiſm*." But let it be conſidered whether this obſervation be not equally applicable to the ſubject in hand. Our

* *Let. to a P. U.* P. I. pref. p. x.

opponents, it is true, may imbibe ſentiments which are great and tranſporting; ſuch are their views of the works of God in creation; but ſo are thoſe of Deiſts; neither are theſe the ſentiments wherein they differ from us. Is the Socinian ſyſtem, *as diſtinguiſhed from ours*, adapted to raiſe and tranſport the heart? This is the queſtion. Let us ſelect only one topic for an example:—Has any thing, or can any thing be written, on the ſcheme of our adverſaries, upon *the death of Chriſt*, equal to the following lines?

"Religion! thou the ſoul of happineſs;
And groaning *Calvary* of thee! *there* ſhine
The nobleſt truths; *there* ſtrongeſt motives ſting!
There ſacred violence aſſaults the ſoul. ——
My theme! my inſpiration! and my crown!
My ſtrength in age! my riſe in low eſtate!
My ſoul's ambition, pleaſure, wealth!—my world!
My light in darkneſs! and my life in death!
My boaſt through time! bliſs through eternity!
Eternity too ſhort to ſpeak thy praiſe!
Or fathom thy profound of love to man!
To man, of men the meaneſt, ev'n to me;
My ſacrifice! my God! what things are theſe!"

Again,

"Pardon for infinite offence! and pardon
Through means that ſpeak it's value infinite!
A pardon bought with blood! with blood divine!
With blood divine of him I made my foe!
Perſiſted to provoke! though woo'd, and aw'd,
Bleſs'd and chaſtis'd, a flagrant rebel ſtill!

A rebel

A rebel 'midſt the thunders of his throne!
Nor I alone, a rebel univerſe!
My ſpecies up in arms! not one exempt!
Yet for the fouleſt of the foul he dies! ——
Bound every heart! and every boſom burn!
Oh what a ſcale of miracles is here! ——
Praiſe! flow for ever (if aſtoniſhment
Will give thee leave) my praiſe! for ever flow;
Praiſe ardent, cordial, conſtant, to high heaven
More fragrant, than *Arabia* ſacrific'd;
And all her ſpicy mountains in a flame!"
Night Thoughts, Nt. 4.

There is a rich, great, and raviſhing quality in the above ſentiments, which no other theme can inſpire. Had the writer been a Socinian, and attempted to write upon the death of Chriſt, he might by the power of his mind, and the fire of his genius, have contributed a little to raiſe his ſubject; but here his ſubject raiſes him, raiſes him above and beyond himſelf.

The dignity of Chriſt, together with his glorious undertaking, was, as we have ſeen in Letter XI, a ſource of joy and love to the primitive chriſtians. It was their darling theme, and that which raiſed them above themſelves. Now upon our ſyſtem chriſtians may ſtill rejoice in the ſame manner, and give vent to their ſouls, and all that is within them, and that without fear of going beyond the words of truth and ſoberneſs, or bordering, or ſeeming to border, upon idolatry. But upon the

principles of our opponents, the ſacred writers muſt have dealt largely in hyperbole; and it muſt be our buſineſs, inſtead of entering into their ſpirit, to ſit down with "cool ſenſations," criticiſe their words, and explain away their apparent meaning.

Brethren! I appeal to your own hearts, as men who have been brought to conſider yourſelves as the ſcriptures repreſent you, Is there any thing in that preaching which leaves out the doctrine of ſalvation by an atoning ſacrifice that can afford you any relief? Is it not like the prieſt and levite, who paſſed by on the other ſide? Is not the doctrine of atonement by the blood of Chriſt, like the oil and wine of the good Samaritan? Under all the preſſures of life, whether from inward conflicts or outward troubles, is not this your grand ſupport? What but *an advocate with the Father*, one *who is the propitiation for our ſins*, could prevent you, when you have ſinned againſt God, from ſinking into deſpondency, and encourage you to ſue afreſh for mercy? What elſe could ſo diveſt affliction of it's bitterneſs, death of it's ſting, or the grave of it's gloomy aſpect? In fine, what elſe could enable you to contemplate a future judgment with compoſure? What hope could you entertain of being juſtified at that day upon any other footing than this, *It is Chriſt that died?*

I am aware I ſhall be told, that this is appealing

to

to the paſſions, and to the paſſions of enthuſiaſts; but in a queſtion which relates to happineſs, the heart is the beſt criterion; and if it be enthuſiaſm to think and feel concerning ourſelves as the ſcriptures repreſent us, and concerning Chriſt as he is there exhibited, let me live and die an enthuſiaſt. So far from being aſhamed to appeal to ſuch characters, in my opinion they are the only competent judges. Men of mere ſpeculation play with doctrines; it is the plain and ſerious chriſtian that knows moſt of their real tendency. In a queſtion therefore which concerns their happy or unhappy influence, their judgment is of the greateſt importance.

Dr. Prieſtley allows that "The doctrines of a "general and a moſt particular providence is ſo "leading a feature in every ſcheme of predeſtina-"tion, it brings God ſo much into every thing,— "that an habitual and animated devotion will be "the reſult." On Neceſſity, p. 162. This witneſs is true; nor is this all. The ſame principle taken in it's connection with various others, equally provides for a ſerene and joyful ſatisfaction in all the events of time. All the changes and viciſſitudes of nations, all the furious oppoſitions to the church of Chriſt, all the efforts to overturn the doctrine of the croſs, or blot out the ſpirit of chriſtianity from the earth, we conſider as permitted for wiſe and holy ends. And being ſatisfied that they make

make a part of God's eternal plan, we are not inordinately anxious about them. We can aſſure our opponents that when we hear them boaſt of their increaſing numbers, as alſo profeſſed unbelievers of their's, it gives us no other pain than that which ariſes from good will to men. We have no doubt of theſe things being wiſely permitted, and deſigned as a fan in the hand of Chriſt by which he will thoroughly purge his floor; or of the true goſpel of Chriſt, like the ſun in the heavens, finally diſperſing all theſe interpoſing clouds. We are perſuaded, as well as they, that things upon the whole, whether we in our contracted ſpheres of obſervation perceive it or not, are tending to the general good; that the empire of truth and righteouſneſs, notwithſtanding all the infidelity and iniquity in the world, is upon the increaſe; that it muſt increaſe more and more; that glorious things are yet to be accompliſhed in the church of God; and that all we have hitherto heard or ſeen of the goſpel diſpenſation is but as the firſt fruits of an abundant harveſt.

After all, it is allowed that there is a conſiderable number of perſons amongſt us who are ſubject to a too great degree of dejection of mind; but though the number of ſuch perſons, taken in the aggregate, may be conſiderable, yet there are not enow of them to render it any thing like a *general* caſe. And as to thoſe who are ſo, they are almoſt all

all of them ſuch either from conſtitution, or the want of a mature judgment to diſtinguiſh juſt cauſes of ſorrow from others; or from a ſinful neglect of their duties and their advantages. It is a ſufficient proof that our ſyſtem is not of a melancholy tendency, that thoſe who enter moſt deeply into it, provided their conduct be conſiſtent, and there be no particular propenſity to gloomineſs in their conſtitution, are amongſt the happieſt people in the world.

I am, &c.

LET-

LETTER XIV.

A comparison of motives exhibited by the two Systems to Gratitude, Obedience, and Heavenly-mindedness.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE subject of this Letter has been occasionally noticed already: there are a few things however in reserve that require your attention. As men are allowed on both sides to be influenced by *motives*, whichever of the systems it is that excels in this particular, that of course must be the system which has the greatest tendency to promote a holy life.

One very important motive with which the scriptures acquaint us is, THE LOVE OF GOD, MANIFESTED IN THE GIFT OF HIS SON. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another**.

* John iii. 16. 1 John iv. 10, 11.

Dr.

Dr. *Prieſtley* allows, that "The love of God in "giving his Son to die for us, is the conſideration "on which the ſcriptures always lay the greateſt "ſtreſs as a motive to gratitude and obedience*." As this is a matter of fact, then, allowed on both ſides, it may be worth while to make ſome enquiry into the reaſon of it; or *why* it is that ſo great a ſtreſs ſhould be laid in the ſcriptures upon this motive. In all other caſes an obligation to gratitude is ſuppoſed to bear ſome proportion to the greatneſs or *value* of the gift; but if it be allowed to be ſo in this inſtance, it will follow that the ſyſtem which gives us the moſt exalted views of the dignity of Chriſt muſt include the ſtrongeſt motives of obedience and gratitude.

If there be any meaning in words, the phraſeology of John iii. 16. *God ſo loved the world, that he gave* HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON,—conveys an idea of valuableneſs, or rather of invaluableneſs, in the object beſtowed. So great was this gift, that the love of God in the beſtowment of it was ſuppoſed to be *inexpreſſible*. We are not told *how* much he loved the world, but that he ſo loved it that he gave his only begotten Son. If Jeſus Chriſt be of more worth than the *world* for which he was given, then was the language of the ſacred writer fit and proper; and then was the gift of him

* Def. of Unit. for 1786, p. 102.

truly great, and worthy of being made the "Con-
"ſideration upon which the ſcriptures ſhould lay
"the greateſt ſtreſs, as a motive to gratitude and
"obedience." But if he be merely a man like ourſelves, and was given only to inſtruct us by his doctrine and example, there is nothing ſo *great* in the gift of him, nothing that will juſtify the language of the ſacred writers from the appearance of bombaſt; nothing that ſhould render it a motive to gratitude and obedience upon which the *greateſt ſtreſs* ſhould be laid.

Dr. *Prieſtley*, in his *Letters to Dr. Price*, obſerves, that "In paſſing from Trinitarianiſm to "high Arianiſm, from this to your low Arianiſm, "and from this to Socinianiſm, even of the loweſt "kind, in which Chriſt is conſidered as a mere "man, the ſon of Joſeph and Mary, and naturally "as fallible and peccable as Moſes or any other "prophet, there are ſufficient ſources of gratitude "and devotion. I myſelf, continues Dr. Prieſtley "have gone through all thoſe changes, and I think "I may aſſure you that you have nothing to ap-"prehend from any part of the progreſs. In every "ſtage of it you have that conſideration on which "the ſcriptures always lay the greateſt ſtreſs, as a "motive to gratitude and obedience, viz. the love "of God the almighty parent in giving his ſon "to die for us. And whether this Son be man, "angel, or of a ſuper-angelic nature, every thing

"that

" that he has done is to be referred to the *love*
" *of God*, the original author of all, and to
" him all our gratitude and obedience is ultimately
" due*."

Dr. *Prieſtley*, it ſeems, wiſhes to have it thought, that ſeeing Trinitarians, Arians, and Socinians agree that the gift of Chriſt is an expreſſion of the love of God, therefore their different ſyſtems are upon a level as to the grand motive to gratitude and obedience; as if it made no difference at all whether that gift was ſmall or great, whether it was a man, or an angel, or one whom men and angels are bound to adore; whether it was to die for us as other martyrs did, to ſet us an example of perſeverance, or by laying down his life as an atoning ſacrifice to deliver us from the wrath to come. He might as well ſuppoſe the gift of one talent to be equal to that of ten thouſand, and that it would induce an equal return of gratitude; or that the gift of Moſes, or any other prophet afforded an equal motive to love and obedience as the gift of Chriſt.

If in every ſtage of religious principle, whether Trinitarian, Arian, or Socinian, by admitting that one general principle, *the love of God in giving his Son to die for us*, we have the ſame motive to

* *Def. of Unit. for* 1786, p. 101, 102.

gratitude and obedience, and that in the ſame degree, it muſt be becauſe the greatneſs or ſmallneſs of the gift, is a matter of no conſideration, and has no tendency to render a motive ſtronger or weaker. This however is not only repugnant to the plaineſt dictates of reaſon, as hath been already obſerved, but to the doctrine of Chriſt. According to this, *He that hath much forgiven loveth much; and he that hath little forgiven loveth little.* From hence it appears, that the ſyſtem which affords the moſt extenſive views of the evil of ſin, the depth of human apoſtacy, and the magnitude of redemption, will induce us to love the moſt, or produce in us the greateſt degree of gratitude and obedience.

It is to no purpoſe to ſay, as Dr. *Prieſtley* does, that "Every thing that Chriſt hath done is to be "referred to *the love of God.*" For be it ſo, the queſtion is, if his ſyſtem be true, *what hath he done*; and what is there to be referred to the love of God? To ſay the moſt, it can be but little. If Dr. Prieſtley be in the right, the breach between God and man is not ſo great but that our repentance and obedience are of themſelves, without any atonement whatever, ſufficient to heal it. Chriſt therefore could have but *little to do*, and the leſs he had to do, the leſs are we indebted to him, and to God for the gift of him; and in proportion as this is believed, we muſt of courſe feel leſs gratitude, and devotedneſs of ſoul to God.

Another

Another important motive with which the ſcriptures acquaint us, is, THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN COMING INTO THE WORLD, AND LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US. *Let this mind be in you which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himſelf of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that though he was rich, yet for your ſakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich. Foraſmuch as the children were partakers of fleſh and blood, he alſo himſelf took part of the ſame; that through death he might deſtroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil. Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but the ſeed of Abraham. The love of Chriſt conſtraineth us becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him who died for them, and roſe again. Walk in love, as Chriſt hath loved us, and hath given himſelf for us, an offering, and a ſacrifice to God, for a ſweet-ſmelling ſavor. To him that hath loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood—be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.* Such is the uniform language of the New Teſtament concerning the love of Chriſt, and ſuch are the moral purpoſes to which it is applied. It is a preſumption in favour

of

of our ſyſtem, that here the above motives have all their force; whereas in the ſyſtem of our opponents, they have ſcarcely any force at all. The following obſervations may render this ſufficiently evident.

We conſider the coming of Chriſt into the world as a *voluntary undertaking*. His *taking upon him*, or *taking hold*, not of the nature of angels, but the ſeed of Abraham; his *taking upon him* the form of a ſervant, and being made in the likeneſs of men; and that from a ſtate of *mind* which is held up for our example—and his becoming *poor* though *previouſly rich*, for our ſakes, and that as an act of grace, all concur to eſtabliſh this idea. For this we feel our hearts bound by every conſideration that love unparalleled can inſpire, to gratitude and obedience. But our opponents, by ſuppoſing Chriſt to have been a mere man, and to have had no exiſtence till he was born of Mary, are neceſſarily driven to deny that his coming into the world was a voluntary act of his own; and, conquently, that there was any love or *grace* in it. It is true Dr. Prieſtley, in anſwer to Dr. Price, only contends that he "Came into the world in "obedience to the command of the Father, and "not in conſequence of his own propoſal;" but his coming in obedience to the command of the Father is as inconſiſtent with his ſcheme as his coming in conſequence of his own propoſal. If he had

no

no exiſtence previous to his being born of Mary, he could do neither the one nor the other. It would be perfect abſurdity to ſpeak of *our* coming into the world as an act of obedience; and, upon the hypotheſis of Dr. Prieſtley, to ſpeak of the coming of Chriſt under ſuch an idea, muſt be equally abſurd*. Further,

We conſider Chriſt's coming into the world as an act of *condeſcending love*; ſuch indeed as admits of no parallel. The *riches* of Deity, and the poverty of humanity; the *form of God*, and *the form of a ſervant*, afford a contraſt that fills our ſouls with grateful aſtoniſhment. Dr. *Prieſtley*, in the laſt mentioned performance, acknowleges, that "the Trinitarian doctrine of the incarnation is "calculated forcibly to impreſs the mind with di-"vine condeſcenſion." He allows the doctrine of the incarnation, as held by the Arians to have ſuch a tendency in a degree; but tells Dr. *Price*, who pleaded this argument againſt Socinianiſm, that "The Trinitarian hypotheſis of the ſupreme God "becoming man, and then ſuffering and dying "for us, would no doubt impreſs the mind more "forcibly ſtill." page 103. This is one allowed ſource of gratitude and obedience, then, to which the ſcheme of our adverſaries makes no pretence, and for which it can ſupply no adequate ſubſtitute.—But Dr. Prieſtley thinks, it ſeems, to cut

* Def. of Unit. for 1786, p. 102.

up

up at one ſtroke all the advantages which his opponents might hope to gain from theſe conceſſions, by adding, "With what unſpeakable reverence and devotion do the Catholics eat their "Maker." That a kind of ſuperſtitious devotion may be promoted by falſhood, is admitted; ſuch was the *voluntary humility* of thoſe who worſhipped angels: but as thoſe characters, with all their pretended humility, were vainly *puffed up with a fleſhly mind*; ſo all that appearance of reverence and devotion, which is the offſpring of ſuperſtition, will be found to be ſomething at a great remove from piety or devotedneſs to God. The ſuperſtitions of popery, inſtead of promoting reverence and devotion, have been thought, by blinding the mind, and encumbering it with other things, to deſtroy them*. There are times in which Dr. Prieſtley himſelf "cannot conceive of any practical uſe be-"ing made of tranſubſtantiation†;" but now it is put upon a level with a doctrine which it is allowed tends "forcibly to impreſs the mind with divine "condeſcenſion."—Once more;

We believe that Chriſt in laying down his life for us, actually *died as our ſubſtitute*, endured the curſe of the divine law that we might eſcape it,

* See Mr. Robinſon's *Sermon* on 2 Cor. iv. 4. entitled *The Chriſtian Doctrine of Ceremonies.*

† *Def. of Unit. for* 1786, *page* 33.

was

was delivered for our offences, that we might be delivered from the wrath to come; and all this while we were yet enemies. This is a conſideration of the greateſt weight; and if we have any juſtice or ingenuouſneſs about us, love like this muſt conſtrain us to live, not to ourſelves, but to him that died for us and roſe again! But according to our adverſaries, Chriſt died *for us* in no higher ſenſe than a common martyr, who might have ſacrificed his life to maintain his doctrine, and by ſo doing have ſet an example for the good of others. If this be all, why ſhould not we be as much indebted, in point of gratitude, to Stephen, or Paul, or Peter, who alſo in that manner died for us, as to Jeſus Chriſt; and why is there not the ſame reaſon for their death being propoſed as a motive for us to live to them, as for his, that we might live to him?

But there is another motive which Dr. *Prieſtley* repreſents as being "that in Chriſtianity which is "moſt favourable to virtue, namely, "a future "ſtate of retribution, grounded on the firm belief "of the hiſtorical facts recorded in the ſcriptures, "eſpecially the miracles, the death, and the re-"ſurrection of Chriſt. The man, he adds, who "believes theſe things only, and who together with "this acknowleges an univerſal providence, or-"dering all events; who is perſuaded that our ve-"ry hearts are conſtantly open to the divine in-

" ſpection, ſo that no iniquity, or purpoſe of it, " can eſcape his obſervation, will not be a bad " man, or a dangerous member of ſociety*." Dr. *Prieſtley* elſewhere, as we have ſeen, acknowleges that " The love of God in giving his Son to " die for us, is *the conſideration on which the ſcrip-* " *tures always lay the greateſt ſtreſs*, as a motive " to gratitude and obedience;" and yet he ſpeaks here of "a future ſtate of retribution as being that " in Chriſtianity which is *moſt favourable to virtue.*" One ſhould think, that on which the ſcriptures always lay the greateſt ſtreſs, ſhould be that in Chriſtianity which is moſt favourable to virtue, be it what it may. But waving this, let it be conſidered whether the Calviniſtic ſyſtem has not the advantage even upon this ground. The doctrine of a future ſtate of retribution is a ground poſſeſſed by Calviniſts as well as by Socinians; and perhaps it may be found that their views of that ſubject, and others connected with it, are more favourable to virtue and a holy life than thoſe of their adverſaries.

A motive of no ſmall importance by which we profeſs to be influenced is, the *thoughts of our own approaching diſſolution*. Brethren, if you embrace what is called the Calviniſtic view of things, you conſider it your duty and intereſt to be frequently

* *Letter* V. *to Mr. Burn.*

converſing

converſing with mortality. You find ſuch thoughts to have a tendency to moderate your attachments to the preſent world; to preſerve you from being inordinately elated by it's ſmiles, or dejected by it's frowns. The conſideration of the *time being ſhort* teaches you to hold all things with a looſe hand; to weep as though you wept not, and to rejoice as though you rejoiced not. You reckon it a mark of true wiſdom to keep the end of your lives habitually in view; and that you are taught theſe things in the holy ſcriptures, where you are recommended to *go to the houſe of mourning rather than to the houſe of feaſting*; where the godly are deſcribed as praying, *So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wiſdom*; and God himſelf as ſaying, *O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end**. But theſe things, inſtead of being recommended and urged as motives to piety, are diſcouraged by Dr. *Prieſtley*, who teaches that *It is not neceſſary to dwell in our thoughts upon death and futurity, leſt it ſhould interrupt the buſineſs of life, and cauſe us to live in perpetual bondage.*†

Further,

The ſcriptures greatly recommend the virtue of *heavenly-mindedneſs*. They Teach chriſtians to

* Eccle. vii. 2. Pſalm xc. 12. Deut. xxxii. 29

† *Sermon on the death of Mr. Robinſon*, page 7,—12.

conſider themſelves as ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth—to ſet their affections on things above, and not on things upon the earth—to be dead to the world, and to conſider their life, or portion, as hid with Chriſt in God. The ſpiritual holy and happy ſtate, which according to the Calviniſtic ſyſtem, commences at death, and is augmented at the reſurrection, tends more than a little to promote this virtue. If, brethren, you adopt theſe views of things, you conſider the body as a tabernacle, a temporary habitation; and when this tabernacle is diſſolved by death, you expect an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; therefore it is that you deſire to be abſent from the body and preſent with the Lord. There are ſeaſons in your life in which your views are expanded, and your heart enlarged; at thoſe ſeaſons eſpecially, the world loſes it's charms, and you ſee nothing worth living for, except to ſerve and glorify God. You have, in a degree, the ſame feelings which the apoſtle Paul appears to have poſſeſſed, when he ſaid, *I am in a ſtrait betwixt two, having a deſire to depart, and to be with Chriſt which is far better—For me to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain.* But Dr. *Prieſtley* teaches that the heavenly ſtate ſhall not commence till the reſurrection. He does not ſuppoſe that there is any ſtate of exiſtence, ſtrictly ſpeaking, wherein we ſhall be abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord; for he conſiders the ſoul as having no exiſtence at all ſeparate from the body.

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He muſt therefore of neceſſity be a ſtranger to any ſuch *ſtrait* as that mentioned by the apoſtle. If the queſtion were put to him, or to any of his ſentiments, Whether they would chuſe to abide longer *in the fleſh*, which might be profitable to their connexions, or immediately depart this life, they would be at no loſs what to anſwer. They could not, in any rational ſenſe, conſider death as *gain*. It would be impoſſible for them upon their principle, to deſire to depart. Suppoſing that they will come to the poſſeſſion of heavenly felicity as early if they die fifty years hence, as if they ſhould die at the preſent time, they muſt rather deſire to live as long as the courſe of nature will admit, as long however as life can be conſidered as preferable to nonexiſtence. It would indicate even a mean and unworthy temper of mind, upon their principles, to be in ſuch a *ſtrait* as Paul deſcribes; it would imply that they were weary of their work, and were at a loſs whether they ſhould chuſe a ceſſation of being, or to be employed in ſerving God, and doing good to their fellow creatures. Once more,

The NATURE and EMPLOYMENTS of the heavenly ſtate alſo deſerve to be conſidered. If you adopt the Calviniſtic view of things, you conſider the enjoyments and employments of that ſtate in a very different light, from that in which Socinian writers repreſent them. You read in your Bibles that *The Lord will be our everlaſting light, and our God*

our

our glory—that our life is hid with Chriſt, in God; that *when he ſhall appear we ſhall appear with him in glory*—and that we ſhall then be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is. From hence you conclude that A FULL ENJOYMENT OF GOD, AND CONFORMITY TO HIM, ARE THE SUM OF HEAVEN. You read further, that the bliſs in reſerve for chriſtians is *a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory—that now we are the ſons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be—and from hence you naturally conclude*, that THE HEAVENLY STATE WILL ABUNDANTLY SURPASS ALL OUR PRESENT CONCEPTIONS OF IT. Again, you read that *thoſe who ſhall be found worthy to obtain that world, and the reſurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God.* From hence you conclude that THE EMPLOYMENTS AND ENJOYMENTS OF THAT STATE ARE ALTOGETHER SPIRITUAL AND HOLY. Again, you read of our knowlege here being *in part*, but that there we ſhall *know even as we are known*—and that *the Lamb which is in the midſt of the throne ſhall feed us, and lead us to living fountains of water!* From hence you conclude that we ſhall not only enjoy greater means of knowlege, which like a fountain will flow for ever, and aſſauge our thirſty ſouls; but THAT OUR MINDS WILL ABUNDANTLY BE IRRADIATED, AND OUR HEARTS ENLARGED, BY THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST, WHOSE DELIGHTFUL WORK IT WILL BE TO OPEN THE BOOK, AS IT WERE, AND

TO

TO LOOSE THE SEALS; TO UNFOLD THE MYSTERIES OF GOD, AND TO CONDUCT OUR MINDS AMIDST THEIR BOUNDLESS RESEARCHES. Once more; You read, concerning thoſe who ſhall obtain that world and the reſurrection, *Neither can they die any more*—that they ſhall *go no more out*—that the *inheritance* to which they are reſerved is *incorruptible, and fadeth not away*—and that the weight of glory which we look for is *eternal*: and From hence you conclude, that THE IMMORTALITY PROMISED TO CHRISTIANS, IS CERTAIN AND ABSOLUTE.

Theſe are very important matters, and muſt have a great influence in attracting your hearts towards heaven. Theſe were the things which cauſed the patriarchs to live like ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth; becauſe they looked for an habitation, a better country, even an heavenly one. Theſe were the things that made the apoſtles and primitive chriſtians conſider their afflictions as light and *momentary. For this cauſe, ſay they, we faint not, but though our outward man periſh, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are eternal.*

But

But if you adopt the Socinian view of things, your ideas of the heavenly ſtate, compared with the above, will be miſerably flat and cold; and, conſequently, your affections will be more ſet on things below, and leſs on things above. Dr. *Prieſtley* in his *Sermon on the death of Mr. Robinſon* is not only employed in diſſuading people from too much thought and fear about death, but from too much *hope* from the ſtate beyond it. He ſeems to fear leſt we ſhould form too high expectations of heavenly felicity, and ſo meet with a diſappointment. The heaven which he there deſcribes does not neceſſarily include *any one of the foregoing ideas, but may exiſt* if they were all excluded!

Take his own words.

"The change of our *condition* by death may "not be ſo great as we are apt to imagine. As "our *natures* will not be changed, but only *im-* "*proved*, we have no reaſon to think that the "*future world* (which will be adapted to our merely "improved nature) will be materially different "from *this*. And indeed why ſhould we aſk, or "expect any thing more? If we ſhould ſtill be "obliged to provide for our ſubſiſtence by exer- "ciſe, or labour; is that a thing to be complained "of by thoſe who are ſuppoſed to have acquired "fixed habits of induſtry, becoming rational be- "ings, and who have never been able to bear the

"languor

"languor of abſolute reſt, or indolence? Our fu-
"ture happineſs has with much reaſon, been ſup-
"poſed to ariſe from an increaſe of knowlege.
"But if we ſhould have nothing more than the
"means of knowlege furniſhed us, as we have
"here, but be left to our own labour to find it
"out, is that to be complained of by thoſe who
"will have acquired both a *love of truth*, and a
"habit of enquiring after it? To make diſcove-
"ries ourſelves though the ſearch may acquire
"time and labour, is unſpeakably more pleaſing
"than to learn every thing by the information of
"others.* "If the *immortality* that is promiſed
"to us in the goſpel ſhould not be *neceſſary*, and
"*abſolute*, and we ſhould only have the *certain*
"*means* of making ourſelves immortal, we ſhould
"have much to be thankful for. What the ſcrip-
"tures inform us concerning a future life is ex-
"preſſed in general terms, and often in figurative
"language. A more particular knowlege of it is
"wiſely concealed from us." Page 18.

You ſee brethren, here is not one word of God, or of Chriſt, as being the ſum and ſubſtance of our bliſs; and, except that mention is once made of our being freed from "imperfections bodily and

* Is not this the rock on which Dr. Prieſtley and his brethren ſplit? Have they not on this very principle coined a goſpel of their own, inſtead of receiving the inſtructions of the ſacred writers?

trines, ſome are forced into Infidelity, while others are ſaved from it by his conciliating principles.* The principle of *accommodation* has been already noticed in Letter III, and ſhown from the example of the popiſh miſſionaries in China to have no good tendency. To remove every ſtumbling-block out of the way of Infidels, would be to annihilate the goſpel. Such attempts alſo ſuppoſe what is not true, that their not believing in chriſtianity is owing to ſome fault in the ſyſtem as generally received, and not to the temper of their own minds. Faults there are, no doubt, but if their hearts were right, they would ſearch the ſcriptures for themſelves, and form their own ſentiments, according to the beſt of their capacity.

The near relation of Socinianiſm to Deiſm may

* Here the late Mr. Robinſon of Cambridge is brought in as an example, who as ſome think, in an overſtretch of complaiſance, told the Doctor in a private letter that "But for his "friendly aid, he feared he ſhould have gone from enthuſiaſm "to Deiſm." *Letters to Mr. Burn, Preface.* To ſay nothing whether the uſe Dr. Prieſtley made of this *private* Letter was warrantable, and whether it would not have been full as modeſt to have forborn to publiſh to the world ſo high a compliment on himſelf; ſuppoſing not only the thing itſelf to have been ſtrictly true, but that the conduct of Dr. Prieſtley was as ſtrictly proper, what does it prove? nothing, except that the region of Socinianiſm is ſo near to that of Deiſm, that now and then an individual, who was on the high road to the one, has ſtopped ſhort, and taken up with the other.

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LETTER XV.

On the Reſemblance of Socinianiſm to Deiſm, and the tendency of the one to the other.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

I Suppoſe we may take it for granted, at preſent, that chriſtianity is favourable to true virtue, and that infidelity is the reverſe; if it can be proved, therefore, that Socinianiſm reſembles infidelity in ſeveral of it's leading features, and conſequently tends towards it, that will be the ſame as proving it unfavourable to true virtue.

It has been obſerved, and I think juſtly, that "There is no conſiſtent medium between genuine "Chriſtianity and Infidelity." The ſmalleſt departure from the one, is a ſtep towards the other. There are different degrees of approach, but all move on in the ſame direction. Socinians, however, are not willing to own that their ſcheme hath any ſuch tendency. Dr. *Prieſtley* appears to be more than a little hurt at being repreſented by the bigots (as he politely calls thoſe who think ill of his principles) as undermining chriſtianity, and intimates that by their rigid attachment to certain doc-

trines, ſome are forced into Infidelity, while others are ſaved from it by his conciliating principles.* The principle of *accommodation* has been already noticed in Letter III, and ſhown from the example of the popiſh miſſionaries in China to have no good tendency. To remove every ſtumbling-block out of the way of Infidels, would be to annihilate the goſpel. Such attempts alſo ſuppoſe what is not true, that their not believing in chriſtianity is owing to ſome fault in the ſyſtem as generally received, and not to the temper of their own minds. Faults there are, no doubt, but if their hearts were right, they would ſearch the ſcriptures for themſelves, and form their own ſentiments, according to the beſt of their capacity.

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be proved from the agreement of their principles, their prejudices, their ſpirit, and their ſucceſs.

Firſt, There is an agreement in their *leading principles*. In almoſt all thoſe points wherein Socinians differ from Calviniſts, they agree with Deiſts. One of the moſt important principles in the ſcheme of Infidelity, it is well known, is THE SUFFICIENCY OF HUMAN REASON. This is the great bulwark of the cauſe, and the main ground on which it's advocates proceed in rejecting Revelation. If the one, ſay they, be ſufficient, the other is unneceſſary. Whether the Socinians do not imbibe the ſame principle, and follow hard after the Deiſts in it's application too, we will now enquire. When Mr. *Burn* charged Dr. *Prieſtley* with making "The reaſon of the individual the ſole umpire in matters of faith;" the Doctor denied the charge, and ſuppoſed that Mr. *Burn* muſt have been "reading the writings of Bolingbroke, Hume or Voltaire, and have imagined them to be his;" —as if none but profeſſed Infidels maintained that principle. This however is allowing it to be a principle pertaining to infidelity, and of ſuch importance it ſhould ſeem as to diſtinguiſh it from Chriſtianity. If it ſhould prove, therefore, that the ſame principle occupies a place, yea, and an equally important place in the Socinian ſcheme, it will follow that Socinianiſm and Deiſm muſt be nearly allied. But Dr. Prieſtley, as was ſaid, denies the charge, tells us that

that he "has written a great deal to prove *the inſufficiency of human reaſon*, and accuſes Mr. Burn of "The groſſeſt and moſt unfounded calumny" in charging ſuch a principle upon him. *Letter IV. to Mr. Burn.*

If what Mr. Burn alleges be "a groſs and an unfounded calumny," it is rather extraordinary that ſuch a number of reſpectable writers ſhould have ſuggeſted the ſame thing. I ſuppoſe there has been ſcarcely a writer of any note amongſt us, but who, if this be calumny, has calumniated the Socinians. If there be any credit due to Trinitarian authors, they certainly have hitherto *underſtood* matters in a different light from that in which they are here repreſented. They have ſuppoſed, whether rightly or not, that their opponents in general do imbibe the very principle which Dr. Prieſtley ſo ſtrongly diſavows.

But this is not all; if what Mr. Burn alleges, be a groſs and unfounded calumny, it is ſtill more extraordinary, that Socinian writers ſhould calumniate themſelves. Mr. *Robinſon*, whom Dr. Prieſtley glories in as his convert, affirms much the ſame thing, and that in his *Hiſtory of Baptiſm*, a work publiſhed after he had adopted the Socinian ſyſtem. In anſwering an objection brought againſt the Baptiſts as being enthuſiaſts, he aſks, "Were Caſtellio, "and Servetus, Socinus and Crellius enthuſiaſts? "On

" On the contrary, they are taxed with attributing " too much to reaſon," AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF " REASON IS THE SOUL OF THEIR SYSTEM." page 47. If the laſt member of this ſentence be true, and if Dr Prieſtley have maintained the ſame principle as much as any of his predeceſſors, then is what Mr. Burn alleges true alſo, and no calumny. —Farther, If Mr. Robinſon's words be true, the ſyſtems of a Socinus and a Bolingbroke, however they may differ in ſome particulars, cannot be very wide aſunder: they may be two bodies, but the difference can never be very material, ſo long as thoſe bodies are inhabited by ONE SOUL.

But was not Mr. Robinſon miſtaken? Has he not inadvertently granted that which ought not in juſtice to have been granted? Suppoſe he has, why might not the ſame conſtruction have been put upon what is alleged by Mr. Burn, and other Trinitarian writers, inſtead of calling it by the hard name of " groſs and unfounded calumny."

If we ſay no worſe of our opponents than they ſay of themſelves, they can have no juſt grounds of complaint, at leaſt, they ſhould complain with leſs ſeverity. Further, if Mr. Robinſon were miſtaken, and if Dr. Prieſtley does really maintain *the inſufficiency of human reaſon* in matters of religion, it will follow that after all that he has pleaded in behalf of reaſon, he is no better friend to

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ſhall be received, and what rejected.* But this is not only "making the reaſon of the individual the "ſole umpire in matters of "faith," but virtually rendering Revelation unneceſſary. If the reaſon of the individual be to ſit ſupreme judge upon the throne, and inſiſt that every doctrine which revelation propoſes ſhall approve itſelf to it's dictates, or be rejected, the neceſſity of the latter might as well be totally denied. If it be neceſſary however, it is no otherwiſe than as a French Parliament uſed to be neceſſary to a French King; not in order to dictate to his Majeſty, but to afford a ſanction to his reſolutions; or at leaſt to tender him a little advice, in order to aſſiſt him in forming his judgment, but which advice he might receive or reject, as beſt ſuited his inclination.

Dr. Prieſtley often ſuggeſts, that he makes no other uſe of human reaſon than all proteſtants make againſt the papiſts when pleading againſt the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; that is, where the literal ſenſe of a text involves an abſurdity, he ſo far follows the dictates of reaſon as to underſtand it figuratively. But this is not the caſe: for the queſtion here does not at all reſpect the *meaning* of ſcripture, whether it ſhould be underſtood literally or figuratively; but whether it's *allowed* meaning ought to be accepted as truth any farther than it

* See Letter XI.

correſponds

correſponds with our pre-conceived notions of what is reaſon? According to the principles and charges before cited, it ought not; and this is not only ſummoning revelation to the bar of our own underſtandings, but actually paſſing ſentence againſt it.

The near affinity between Socinianiſm and Deiſm is ſo manifeſt, that it is in vain to diſown it. Nobody ſuppoſes them throughout the ſame. One acknowleges Chriſt to be a true prophet; the other conſiders him as an impoſtor: but the denial of the proper inſpiration of the ſcriptures, with the receiving of ſome parts of them as true, and rejecting other parts even of the ſame books as "Lame accounts, improper quotations, and inconcluſive reaſonings," naturally lead to Deiſm. Deiſts themſelves do not ſo reject the Bible, as to diſbelieve every hiſtorical event which is there recorded. They would not deny, I ſuppoſe, that there were ſuch characters in the world as Abraham, and Moſes, and Jeſus; and that ſome things which are written concerning each, were true.

In ſhort they take what they like beſt, as they would from any other ancient hiſtory, and reject the reſt; and what does Dr. Prieſtley even pretend to more? He does not reject *ſo much* as a Deiſt, he admits various articles which the other denies; but the difference is only in degree. The relation be-

tween the firſt and leading principles of their reſpective ſyſtems is ſo near, that one ſpirit may be ſaid to pervade them both; or, to uſe the imagery of Mr. Robinſon, one ſoul to inhabit theſe different bodies. The oppoſition between faith and unbelief is ſo great in the ſcriptures, that no leſs than ſalvation is promiſed to the one, and damnation threatened to the other; but if they were no farther aſunder than Socinianiſm and Deiſm, it is wonderful that their conſequences ſhould be ſo widely different.

Another leading principle common to Socinians and Deiſts is *The non-importance of principle itſelf, in order to the enjoyment of the divine favour.* Nothing is more common than for profeſſed Infidels to exclaim againſt Chriſtianity on account of it's rendering the belief of the goſpel neceſſary to ſalvation. *Lord Shaftſbury* inſinuates, that the heathen magiſtrates in the firſt ages of chriſtianity, might have been juſtly offended "With a notion which treated them "and all men as profane, impious, and damned, "who entered not into particular modes of wor-"ſhip, of which there had been formerly ſo many "thouſand kinds inſtituted, all of them compati-"ble, and ſociable, till that time*." To the ſame purpoſe is what Mr. *Paine* advances, who, I imagine, would make no pretence of friendſhip towards

Charcteriſ. Vol. I. § III.

"chriſtianity,

"chriſtianity. "If we ſuppoſe a large family of "children, ſays he, who on any particular day, or "particular circumſtance, made it a cuſtom to pre-"ſent to their parents ſome token of their affection "and gratitude, each of them would make a diffe-"rent offering, and moſt probably in a different "manner. Some would pay their congratulations "in themes of verſe, or proſe, by ſome little devices "as their genius dictated, or according to what "they thought would pleaſe; and perhaps the "leaſt of all, not able to do any of thoſe things, "would ramble into the garden, or the field, and "gather what it thought the prettieſt flower it "could find, though perhaps it might be but a "ſimple weed. The parent would be more grati-"fied by ſuch variety, than if the whole of them "had acted on a concerted plan, and each had "made exactly the ſame offering*." And this he applies not merely to the diverſified modes of worſhipping God, which come within the limits of the divine command, but to the various ways in which mankind have in all ages and nations worſhipped, or pretended to worſhip, a Deity. The ſentiment which this writer, and all others of his ſtamp, would wiſh to propagate, is, That in all modes of religion men may be very ſincere; and that, being ſo, all are alike acceptable to God. This is infidelity undiſguiſed. Yet this is no more than Dr. *Prieſtley* has advanced in his *differences in Religious Opinions*.

* *Rights of Man. Part II.* near the concluſion,

"If

"If we can be ſo happy, he ſays, as to believe "that—all differences in modes of worſhip may "be only the different methods by which different "men (who are equally *the offspring of God)* are "endeavouring to honour and obey their common "parent, our differences of opinion would have "no tendency to leſſen our mutual love and "eſteem."

Several other principles might be mentioned in which Socinians and Deiſts are agreed; and in which the ſame objections that are made by the one againſt Calviniſm, are made by the other againſt the Holy Scriptures. Do Socinians reject the Calviniſtic ſyſtem, becauſe it repreſents God as a Vindictive Being? For the ſame reaſon the Scriptures themſelves are rejected by the Deiſts. Are the former offended with Calviniſm on account of the doctrine of divine ſovereignty? The latter are equally offended with the Bible for the ſame thing. "The God of the Old Teſtament, they ſay, is a par-"tial Being, ſelecting one nation to himſelf, and "hating all the reſt." It is a conſolation to us to trace theſe likeneſſes, as it affords a preſumption that our ſentiments accord with the ſcriptures, being liable to the ſame objections.

But paſſing the likeneſs between Socinianiſm and Deiſm in matters of principle, let us next conſider

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the ſimilarity of their *prejudices*. All men without exception have their prejudices; they are not, indeed, of the ſame kind, but very different in different perſons; education, circumſtances, connexions, opinions, with various other things ſerve to determine the particular kind of prejudices to which we are moſt expoſed. The peculiar prejudices of Deiſts are drawn, I think, with great juſtneſs, by Dr. Prieſtley himſelf. "There is no claſs or deſcrip-
"tion of men, he obſerves, but what are ſubject to
"peculiar prejudices and every prejudice muſt
"operate as an obſtacle to the reception of ſome
"truth. It is in vain for unbelievers to pretend to
"be free from prejudice. They may, indeed, be
"free from thoſe of the vulgar, but they have
"others peculiar to themſelves; and the very af-
"fectation of being free from vulgar prejudices
"and of being wiſer than the reſt of mankind
"muſt indiſpoſe them to the admiſſion even of
"truth, if it ſhould happen to be with the common
"people. The ſuſpicion that the faith of the
"vulgar is ſuperſtitious and falſe is, no doubt, of-
"ten well founded, becauſe they, of courſe, main-
"tain the *oldeſt opinions*, while the ſpeculative part
"of mankind are making new diſcoveries in ſcience.
"Yet we often find that they who pride themſelves
"on their being the fartheſt removed from ſuper-
"ſtition in ſome things, are the greateſt dupes to
"it in others, and it is not univerſally true that all
"old opinions are falſe, and all new ones well
"founded.

" founded. An averſion to the creed of the vul-
" gar may therefore miſlead a man, and from a
" fondneſs for ſingularity he may be ſingularly in
" the wrong*."

Let thoſe who are beſt acquainted with Socinians judge whether this addreſs, with a very few alterations be not equally adapted to them as to profeſſed unbelievers. We know who they are, beſides avowed Infidels, who affect to be " emancipated from *vul-*
" *gar prejudices* and *popular ſuperſtitions*, and to
" embrace a rational ſyſtem of faith*." It is very common with Socinian writers, as much as it is with Deiſts, to value themſelves on being wiſer than the reſt of mankind, and to deſpiſe the judgment of plain chriſtians, as being the judgment of the *vulgar* and the *populace*. It is true Dr. Prieſtley has addreſſed Letters to the common people at Birmingham, and has complimented them with being " capable of judging in matters of religion
" and government." It is no great compliment however, to chriſtians in general of that deſcription, to ſuppoſe, as he frequently does, not only that the Trinitarian ſyſtem, but every other, was the invention of learned men in different ages, and that the vulgar have always been led by their influence. " The creed of the vulgar of the preſent day, he ob-

* Let. to a Phil. Unb. Part II.

* Mr. Belſham's Serm. Page 4, 32.

" ſerves,

"ſerves, is to be conſidered not ſo much as *their* "creed, for they were not the inventors of it, as "that of the thinking and inquiſitive in ſome for-"mer period. For thoſe whom we diſtinguiſh by "the appellation of the *vulgar*, are not thoſe who "introduce any new opinions, but who receive "them from others of whoſe judgment they have "been led to think highly*." On this principle Dr. Prieſtley ſomewhere expreſſes his perſuaſion of the future prevalence of Unitarianiſm. He grants that at preſent the body of common chriſtians are againſt it; but as the learned and the ſpeculative are verging towards it, he ſuppoſes the other will in time follow them. What is this but ſuppoſing them incapable of forming religious ſentiments for themſelves? as if the Bible were to them a ſealed book, and they had only to believe the ſyſtem that happened to be in faſhion, or rather *to have been* in faſhion ſome years before they were born, and to dance after the pipe of learned men.

It is acknowleged that, in matters of human ſcience, common people having no ſtandard to judge by, are generally led by the learned; but ſurely it is ſomewhat different in religion, where we have a ſtandard, and one too that is adapted to the underſtanding of the ſimple. However many people may be led implicitly by others, yet there will al-

* Let. to a Phil. Unb. Part II. Let. V.

ways be a number of plain, intelligent, ſerious chriſtians, who will read the Bible and judge for themſelves; and chriſtians of this deſcription will always have a much greater influence, even upon thoſe who do not judge for themſelves, than mere ſpeculative men, whom the moſt ignorant cannot but perceive to be wanting in ſerious religion, and reſpect to mankind; and while this is the caſe, there is no great danger of the body of common chriſtians becoming Socinians.

There is a *bold and daring ſpirit* diſcovered in the wr tings of Infidels; a ſpirit that fears not to ſpeak of ſacred things with the moſt indecent freedom. They love to ſpeak of Chriſt with a ſneer, calling him *the Carpenter's ſon*, *the Galilean*, or ſome ſuch name, which in their manner of expreſſing it, conveys an idea of contempt. Though Soc nians do not go ſuch lengths as theſe, yet they follow hard after them in their bold and daring manner of ſpeaking. The *magnanimity* which has been aſcribed to Dr. *Prieſtley* for his cenſure of the narrative given by Moſes of the fall of man, calling it "a lame account," is of this kind.

Another ground from which the alliance of Socinianiſm and Deiſm may be inferred, is, That *the ſucceſs of the one, bears a proportion to that of the other, and reſembles it in the moſt eſſential points.* Socinians are continually boaſting of their ſucceſs

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and of the great increaſe of their numbers; ſo alſo are the Deiſts, and I ſuppoſe with equal reaſon. The number of the latter has certainly increaſed in the preſent century in as great, if not a greater proportion, than the former. The truth is, a ſpirit of Infidelity is the main temptation of the preſent age, as a perſecuting ſuperſtition was of ages paſt. This ſpirit has long gone forth into the world. In different denominations of men it exiſts in different degrees, and appears to be permitted to try them that dwell upon the earth. Great multitudes are carried away with it; and no wonder: for it diſguiſes itſelf under a variety of ſpecious names, ſuch as *liberality*, *candor*, and *charity*, by which it impoſes upon the unwary. It flatters human pride, calls evil propenſity *nature*, and gives looſe to it's dictates; and in proportion as it prevails in the judgments, as well as the hearts of men, it ſerves to abate the fear of death and judgment, and ſo makes them more cheerful than they would otherwiſe be.

It is alſo worthy of notice, that the ſucceſs of Socinianiſm and Deiſm has been amongſt the ſame ſort of people; namely, *men of a ſpeculative turn of mind.* Dr. *Prieſtley* ſomewhere obſerves, that "learned men begin more and more to ſuſpect "the doctrine of the trinity:" and poſſibly it may be ſo. But then it might with equal truth be affirmed, that learned men begin more and more to

ſuſpect chriſtianity. Dr. Prieſtley himſelf acknowleges, that "Among thoſe who are called philoſo-"phers the unbelievers are the crowd*." It is true he flatters himſelf that their numbers *will* diminiſh, and that "the evidences of chriſtianity "will meet with a more impartial examination in "the preſent day than they have done in the laſt "fifty years." But this is mere conjecture, ſuch as hath no foundation in fact. We may as well flatter ourſelves that Socinians will diminiſh; there is equal reaſon for the one as for the other. It is not impoſſible that the number of both may be diminiſhed in ſome future time, but when that time will come is not for us to ſay.

It may be ſuggeſted, that it is a circumſtance not much in favour either of the doctrine of the Trinity, or of Chriſtianity, that ſuch a number of philoſophers, and learned men ſuſpect them. But, unfavourable as this circumſtance may appear to ſome, there are others who view it in a very different light. The late Mr. *Robinſon* of Cambridge always contended, that common chriſtians were in a more favourable ſtate for the diſcovery of religious truth than either the rich or the learned. And Dr. Prieſtley not only admits, but accounts for it. "Learned men, he ſays, have *prejudices* peculiar "to themſelves; and the very affectation of being

* *Lett. to a Phil. Unb.* Vol. II. page 32.

"free

" free from vulgar prejudice, and of being wiſer " than the reſt of mankind, muſt indiſpoſe them " to the admiſſion even of truth if it ſhould happen " to be with the common people." If *not many wiſe men after the fleſh* are found amongſt the friends of chriſtianity, or of what we account it's peculiar doctrines, is it any other than what might have been alleged againſt the primitive church? The things of God were then *hid from the wiſe and prudent, and revealed unto babes*, and that becauſe it ſeemed *good in his ſight*.

It is further worthy of notice, that the ſame *diſregard of religion in general*, which is allowed by our opponents to be favourable to Socinianiſm, is equally favourable to Deiſm. Dr. *Prieſtley* deſcribes unbelievers of a certain age, amongſt us, as " having heard chriſtianity from their infancy, as having in general believed it for ſome time, and *as " not coming to diſbelieve it till they had long diſregarded it**." A diſregard of chriſtianity, then, preceded their openly rejecting it, and embracing the ſcheme of infidelity. Now this is the very proceſs of a great number of Socinian converts, as both the Doctor and Mr. Belſham elſewhere acknowlege. It is by a diſregard of all religion that men become Infidels; and it is by the ſame means that others become Socinians.

* *Lett. to a Phil. Unb.* Vol. II. pref. page ix.

Dr. Prieſtley ſeems to admit that his ſcheme approaches nearer to that of unbelievers than our's; but then he diſowns it's having any tendency on that account to lead men to infidelity. On the contrary, he retorts the charge upon his opponents, and aſſerts his own ſcheme to have an oppoſite effect. "An enemy as I am conſidered to Chriſtia-"nity by ſome, ſays he, I have ſaved many from "that infidelity into which the bigots are forcing "them." The caſe of the late Mr. Robinſon is here introduced as an example to confirm this aſſertion. The reaſoning of Dr. Prieſtley on this ſubject reſembles that of Abp. *Laud* on another. When accuſed of leaning to popery, he denied the charge, and gave in a liſt of *twenty-one* perſons whom he had not merely ſaved from going over to that religion, but actually *converted* them from it to the proteſtant faith.* Yet few thinking people imagine the principles of *Laud* to have been very unfriendly to popery; much leſs that they were adapted to ſave men from it.

We have ſeen, in Letter XII. that Socinian writers degrade our only rule of faith, and reduce it to no rule at all, but a mere ſtimulative to comply with the dictates of conſcience. But if the ſcriptures "Were never deſigned to ſettle diſputed "Theories, nor to decide ſpeculative controverted

* See *Neal's Hiſt. of the Puritans*, Vol. III.-Index, Art. Laud.

queſtions,

"queſtions, even in religion and morality," as is advanced in the *Monthly Review*; the writers profeſſing what they did muſt have been either weak or wicked. Both Chriſt and his apoſtles, as we have ſeen already, appealed to the ſcriptures for the truth of their doctrine and the goodneſs of their precepts. In theſe appeals they either conſidered them as the ſtandard of faith and practice, or they did not. If they did, upon the principle above mentioned, they muſt have been weak; if they did not, they muſt have been wicked: in either caſe their teſtimony is worthy of no regard, which is downright Infidelity.

I am not ſufficiently acquainted, either with Socinians or Deiſts, to be able to form a judgement on this ſubject from matter of fact; but I have been told by thoſe who are, that it is very common for thoſe who go over to infidelity to paſs through Socinianiſm in their way. If this be the caſe it is no more than may be expected according to the natural courſe of things. It is not common, I believe, for perſons who go over to Socinianiſm, to go directly from Calviniſm, but through one or other of the different ſtages of Arminianiſm, or Arianiſm, or both. Dr Prieſtley himſelf was once, as he himſelf informs us, "a Calviniſt, and that of the ſtraiteſt "ſect. Afterwards, he adds he became an high "Arian, next a low Arian, and then a Socinian, "and in a little time a Socinian of the loweſt kind,

"in

" in which Chriſt is conſidered as a mere man, the " ſon of Joſeph and Mary, and naturally as fallible " and peccable as Moſes or any other prophet": to which he might have added, and in which the inſpiration of the ſcriptures is given up*. The Doctor alſo informs us that he " does not know when " his creed will be fixed". *Def. of Unit.* for 1787. page 111. And yet he tells us in his Volume of Sermons, page 95, that " Unitarians are not apt to " entertain any doubt of the truth of their princi- " ples". But this, I ſuppoſe, is to be underſtood of their principles only in one point of view, namely, as they are oppoſed to what is commonly called Orthodoxy; for as they are oppoſed to Infidelity they are apt to entertain doubts concerning them as much, and perhaps more than other men; and in that line of improvement to hold themſelves open to the reception of greater and greater illuminations. That I do not miſrepreſent our opponents in this matter, is evident from the words of Dr. Prieſtley, where he tells us that " Materialiſm is that funda- " mental principle in true philoſophy which is " alone perfectly conſonant to the doctrine of the " ſcriptures, and muſt in the progreſs of enquiry " ſoon appear to be ſo: and then ſhould it be found " that an unqeſtionably true philoſophy teaches one " thing, and revelation another, the latter could not " ſtand it's ground, but muſt inevitably be ex-

* Let. to a Phil. Unb. part II. page 33, 35.

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" ploded as contrary to truth and fact*." We may ſufficiently diſcern from this paſſage on which ſide the doubts of Dr. Prieſtley lie, and in what direction he expects his courſe of free-enquiry to conduct him. It is in this direction that he has generally moved hitherto; and ſhould he, before he fixes his creed, go one degree further, is there any doubt where that degree will land him? Should it be upon the ſhores of downright Infidelity, it can afford no greater matter of ſurpriſe to the chriſtian world than of an Arian becoming a Socinian, or a Deiſt an Atheiſt.

Chriſtian brethren, permit me to requeſt that the ſubject may be ſeriouſly conſidered. Whether the foregoing poſitions be ſufficiently proved, it becomes not me to decide. A reflection or two, however, may be offered upon ſuppoſition that they are ſo, and with theſe I ſhall conclude.

Firſt, If that ſyſtem which embraces the Deity and atonement of Chriſt, with other correſpondent doctrines be friendly to a life of ſobriety, righteouſneſs and godlineſs, then it is of God, and it becomes us to abide by it; not becauſe it is the doctrine of Calvin, or any other man who is uninſpired, but as being *The goſpel which we have received* from Chriſt and his Apoſtles, *wherein we ſtand, and by which we are ſaved.*

* Diſquiſition on Materialiſm, page 4, 10, 4, 11.

Secondly, If that ſyſtem of religion which rejects the Deity and Atonement of Chriſt, with other correſpondent doctrines, be unfriendly to the converſion of ſinners to a life of holineſs, and of profeſſed unbelievers to faith in Chriſt; if it be a ſyſtem which irreligious men are the firſt, and ſerious chriſtians the laſt to embrace; if it be found to relax the obligations to virtuous affection and behaviour by relaxing the great ſtandard of virtue itſelf; if it promote neither love to God in his true character, nor benevolence to men as it is exemplified in the ſpirit of Chriſt and his apoſtles; if it lead thoſe who embrace it to be wiſe in their own eyes, and inſtead of humbly deprecating God's righteous diſpleaſure, even in their dying moments arrogantly to challenge his juſtice; if the charity which it inculcates be founded in indifference to divine truth; if it be inconſiſtent with an ardent love to Chriſt, or veneration for the Holy Scriptures; if the happineſs which it promotes be at variance with the joy of the goſpel; finally, if it diminiſh the motives to gratitude, obedience, and heavenly-mindedneſs, and have a natural tendency to infidelity, then it is an immoral ſyſtem, and conſequently is not of God. It is not the goſpel of Chriſt, but *another goſpel*. Thoſe who preach it preach *another Jeſus*, whom the apoſtles did not preach; and thoſe who receive it receive *another ſpirit*, which they never imbibed. It is not the light which cometh from above, but a cloud of darkneſs

darkneſs that has ariſen from beneath, tending to eclipſe it. It is not the high-way of truth, which is a way of holineſs, but a bye-path of error which miſleads the unwary traveller, and of which as we value our immortal intereſts it becomes us to beware. We need not be afraid of evidence, or free enquiry: if irreligious men be the firſt, and ſerious Chriſtians the laſt who embrace the Socinian ſyſtem, it is eaſy to perceive that the avenues which lead to it are not, as it's abettors would perſuade you to think an openneſs to conviction, or a free and impartial enquiry, but *a heart ſecretly diſaffected to the true character and government of God, and diſſatisfied with the goſpel-way of ſalvation.*

I am,

Chriſtian Brethren,

Reſpectfully and Affectionately Your's

ANDREW FULLER.

E R R A T A.

The following are the only inſtances of importance which have occurred to the author, and which the reader is requeſted to correct with his pen. Some leſſer miſtakes in the orthography, which do not affect the ſenſe, are left to his candor.

Page	18.	line 12 for, in caſes, read in *all* caſes
	24.	12 f. unneceſſarily r. neceſſarily
	36.	15 and 16 f. he r. they
	109.	Title f. Let. III. r. Let. VI.
	136.	24 dele *own*
	219.	8 for ana r. and
	235.	11 dele *not*
	——	2 from bottom f. *and* r. *any.*

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MAY 31 1954

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